



**POVERTY REPORT CARDS**

WELCOME TO **FOOD BANKS CANADA'S INAUGURAL POVERTY REPORT CARDS** RELEASE. THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN DEVELOPED TO BRING TOGETHER POVERTY REDUCTION EFFORTS HAPPENING ACROSS THE COUNTRY. AS WE TRY TO UNIFY PEOPLE FROM COAST-TO-COAST-TO-COAST ON OUR SHARED MISSION TO REDUCE FOOD BANK USE BY ADDRESSING ITS ROOT CAUSES. THESE REPORT CARDS CAN HELP FACILITATE DIALOGUES AND A SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF THE ROAD AHEAD. POVERTY IN CANADA CANNOT BE ERADICATED BY ONE GOVERNMENT ALONE. IT WILL REQUIRE A UNITED EFFORT FROM ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT ALONG WITH A NEW DESIRE FOR CHANGE FROM ALL PEOPLE IN CANADA.

POVERTY INDEX SCORE

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## LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

As an organization that supports a network of associations spanning coast-to-coast-to-coast, Food Banks Canada recognizes that our work takes place on the traditional territories of Indigenous Peoples who have cared for this land that we now call Canada since time immemorial.

We acknowledge that many of us are settlers and that these lands that we live, work, meet, and travel on are subject to First Nations self-government under modern treaties, unceded and un-surrendered territories, or traditional territories from which First Nations Peoples, Métis, and Inuit have been displaced.

We are committed to decolonization and to dismantling the systems of oppression that have dispossessed Indigenous people of their lands, including the land on which we operate, and denied them their rights to self-determination.

## OUR COMMITMENT TO EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION

Food Banks Canada is deeply committed to respecting the principles of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) in all we do. As part of our ongoing efforts to develop inclusive environments, our team used an EDI framework to guide us throughout the development of this report.

We recognized the importance of incorporating diverse perspectives from the earliest stages of conceptualization to ensure that our work considered and reflected a robust range of viewpoints. We conducted early consultations with experts—both professionals and people with lived experience—from across the country, actively seeking the participation of individuals from diverse backgrounds and with a range of lived experiences. These consultations provided direction for our team on much of the process, including data collection and policy development.

The data collection process included the analysis of intersectional demographics. Despite conducting a large national survey, the sample sizes of specific groups within the dataset made it difficult to reliably report on important subsets of the population, like racialized communities in each of the provinces. Despite this, we made every effort to be transparent and identify areas where systemically marginalized communities are disproportionately impacted.

The final report underwent a third-party EDI analysis to ensure maximum representation and inclusivity.

As we move forward, Food Banks Canada remains committed to learning and to improving our approach to better include and represent all the members of our diverse community. We will continue to seek new and better ways to embrace EDI principles in our reports and all the work we do. Our vision is a Canada where no one goes hungry. This vision is inclusive of every person within our borders, irrespective of race, national or ethnic origin, language, citizenship, colour, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, income source, age, or mental and/or physical ability.

# INTRODUCTION

In 2002, Quebec developed Canada's first poverty reduction strategy. Since then, some provinces, territories, and the federal government have followed suit with plans of their own. Along the way, some governments have made great strides in their poverty reduction journey, while others have lagged behind.

Now, in 2023, as Canada is faced with a new set of poverty and food insecurity challenges, Food Banks Canada is introducing the country's first comprehensive poverty report to capture the nuances of provincial, territorial, and federal perspectives in one place. The report and corresponding report cards are accompanied by a set of policy recommendations for each level of government, which act as a roadmap to steer the country toward a future where poverty and food insecurity are a thing of the past.



Today, however, poverty is a reality for at least 2.8 million Canadians, and even more live with food insecurity. This dire situation has led to unprecedented numbers of food bank visits. In March 2022, food banks had almost 1.5 million visits, and the numbers continue to rise.

Our country needs a collective and concerted effort from all levels of government to ensure that poverty growth not only slows down but actually reverses course so that we can get Canada to a place where no one is forced to turn to a food bank to make ends meet.

# INTRODUCTION

This task cannot be done by one government body alone. Local, provincial, territorial, and federal governments will have to work in unison to tackle poverty head-on. While every province and territory is affected by poverty, each region faces unique challenges and requires different, nuanced solutions. By shining a spotlight on the poverty landscape in every province and territory in the country, we hope to stimulate dialogue, cooperation, and innovative approaches to address this most significant of issues.



This report examines the state and experience of poverty across the country and offers an analysis of poverty reduction efforts in each jurisdiction. The report not only contains an analysis of poverty in each province and territory – and a

high-level federal analysis - but also contains thoroughly developed report cards based on diverse and reliable data sources. These report cards will serve as a signal to Canadians and governments, as it enables us to assess and compare the performance of all governments in their efforts to eliminate poverty across Canada.

We aim to encourage greater transparency, accountability, and enhanced poverty alleviation efforts, and so this report has been developed with several audiences in mind.

The report cards and accompanying analysis will help policymakers and decision-makers in all levels of government to gauge their performance in the fight against poverty and how they can do better by identifying strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for future progress.

The report also aims to increase the public's understanding of the extent of the assistance (or lack thereof) provided by their provincial and federal governments to individuals and families who live in their communities and are struggling with low incomes and poverty.

As such, this report is designed to be accessible to everyone and to offer an insightful window into the precarity of life in poverty and the various poverty reduction initiatives and programs initiated by our governments.

We hope that people will use this knowledge to participate in informed discussions and advocate for policies that can make a tangible difference in Canada and help us build a country where no one goes hungry.

# RACIAL INEQUALITY AND POVERTY IN CANADA

While poverty in Canada is determined by a range of factors and contexts, it does not affect everyone equally. Rather, it is a phenomenon that is, at its core, produced and sustained by colonialism, racism, marginalization, sexism, heteronormativity, ableism, and many other types of exclusion.

The key to addressing poverty in Canada lies in understanding that certain groups of people lack access to adequate food, housing, social services, and social and political participation. In fact, the data clearly shows that, as a general trend, First Nations people, Métis, Black people, racialized people, people with disabilities, single people, women, transgender people, immigrants, and refugees are the most vulnerable to experiencing poverty.

Putting Canada's deeply racialized and gendered poverty in perspective, disaggregated data from the 2021 census shows that the poverty rate in Canada was 8.1% in 2020, down from 14.5% in 2015. Despite this general downward trend, the census data also reveals a more nuanced and unequal picture. For example, it shows that Indigenous people living in urban areas experience poverty at a higher rate than other groups. In Canada's largest Indigenous urban centre, Winnipeg, 23.2% of First Nations people, 10.5% of Métis, and 14.4% of Inuit lived in poverty in 2020. Countrywide, 14.1% of First Nations, 9.2% of Métis, and 10.2% of Inuit experienced poverty in 2020. In total, 13.9% of Indigenous people aged 16 and older were poor. Among racialized populations, 15.8% of Chinese people, 12.4% of Black Canadians, and 10.8% of South Asians lived in poverty. Census data also indicates that poverty is more prevalent among recently landed – that is, between 2016 and 2021 – and non-permanent residents – for example, refugees – 16.1% and 41.8% respectively.

**26.5%**

of Canadians  
consider themselves  
to be a member of a  
racialized group

**13.9%**

of Indigenous people  
aged 16 and older lived  
in poverty in 2020

**20.6%**

of non-binary people  
lived below the poverty  
line in 2020

These racialized rates are significant in terms of eliminating poverty and its underlying causes given that 26.5% of Canadians consider themselves to be a member of a racialized group, a number that is predicted to increase to 41% by 2041. Regarding poverty and gender, the poverty rate of single mothers with a five-year-old child or younger was the highest of all family types at 31.3%. In addition, 12.9% of transgender men, 12.0% of transgender women, and 20.6% of non-binary people lived below the poverty line.



# RACIAL INEQUALITY AND POVERTY IN CANADA

In view of this snapshot of Canada's racialized (and gendered) poverty, it is not surprising that racialized people disproportionately experience inadequate access to work (including a living wage), housing, social services, and health services. For example, 40% of racialized people – compared to 29% nationally – report low employment earnings. The numbers are markedly worse for Indigenous people, as 50% of this population earns a low wage. A recent analysis by Statistics Canada shows that despite being more likely to have a post-secondary degree, racialized Canadians are less likely to find jobs that pay well and offer benefits at the start of their careers. On average, racialized women made \$45,700 per year compared to \$47,800 for non-racialized and non-Indigenous women; and racialized men made \$51,600 per year compared to \$54,100 for non-racialized and non-Indigenous men. Unfortunately, a new study by Statistics Canada concludes that income inequality is a persistent problem for racialized workers. Proving that the labour market continues to discriminate against racialized groups and women, the study concludes that racialized men's and women's average weekly earnings could fall as much as 31.8%. In particular, the largest differences were observed among Black, Filipino, and Latin American men and Black, Southeast Asian, and Latin American women. However, the problem is not only that racialized and Indigenous people make less than non-racialized and non-Indigenous people but also that they face greater difficulty in accessing stable employment: 38% of racialized people – compared to 25% nationally – cannot attain job stability. At 29%, the proportion of racialized people aged 55–74 finding it difficult to secure a stable job is almost double the national average (15%). Racialized people considered the lack of training opportunities and apprenticeships to be one of the greatest obstacles in their quest for stable employment.

**40%**

of racialized people  
report low  
employment earnings

**38%**

of racialized people  
cannot attain  
job stability

**42%**

of racialized people  
had a hard time  
paying rent

Given the current housing crisis and the fact that racialized people and Indigenous people are disproportionately disadvantaged by low employment earnings and job insecurity, it is unsurprising that racialized people and Indigenous people struggle to keep up with rising rent prices. While on average 42% of racialized people – compared to 31% nationally – had a hard time paying rent, the rate is much higher for women (nearly 50%) and Indigenous groups (47%). While poverty tends to disproportionately affect younger people, older generations of racialized people continue to find rent prices unaffordable. In fact, 30% of racialized people and 28% of Indigenous people are considered to live in core housing need, as they spend 30%–50% of their income on rent, compared to the national average of 23%. A current housing analysis further indicates that, among racialized groups, West Asian (19.5%), Korean (18.7%), and Arab (14.9%) people experienced core housing needs. It also states that while roughly 30% of the Canadian population rents, Black (45.2%), Arab (48%), and Latin American (48.6%) populations were most likely to rent. Given these numbers, it not surprising that these marginalized groups find it hard to find adequate housing (30% of racialized people and 36% for Indigenous people versus 21% nationally).

# RACIAL INEQUALITY AND POVERTY IN CANADA

In addition to facing significant disadvantages in the housing and labour markets, marginalized individuals and communities encounter difficulties accessing social services. In comparison to the national average of 21%, 30% of racialized people and 34% of the Indigenous population struggle to access social services. The rate is also alarmingly high for older generations (33%). Even when they can access governmental support, the social assistance rates that racialized people (32%; older generations 35%) and Indigenous people (47%) receive are not high enough to keep up with costs of living. These challenges are exacerbated by the fact that these historically disadvantaged groups have difficulties navigating the tax system (46% of racialized people and 53% of Indigenous people compared to 40% nationally).

**34%**

of Indigenous people  
struggle to access  
social services

**46%**

of racialized people  
have difficulties  
navigating the Canadian  
tax system

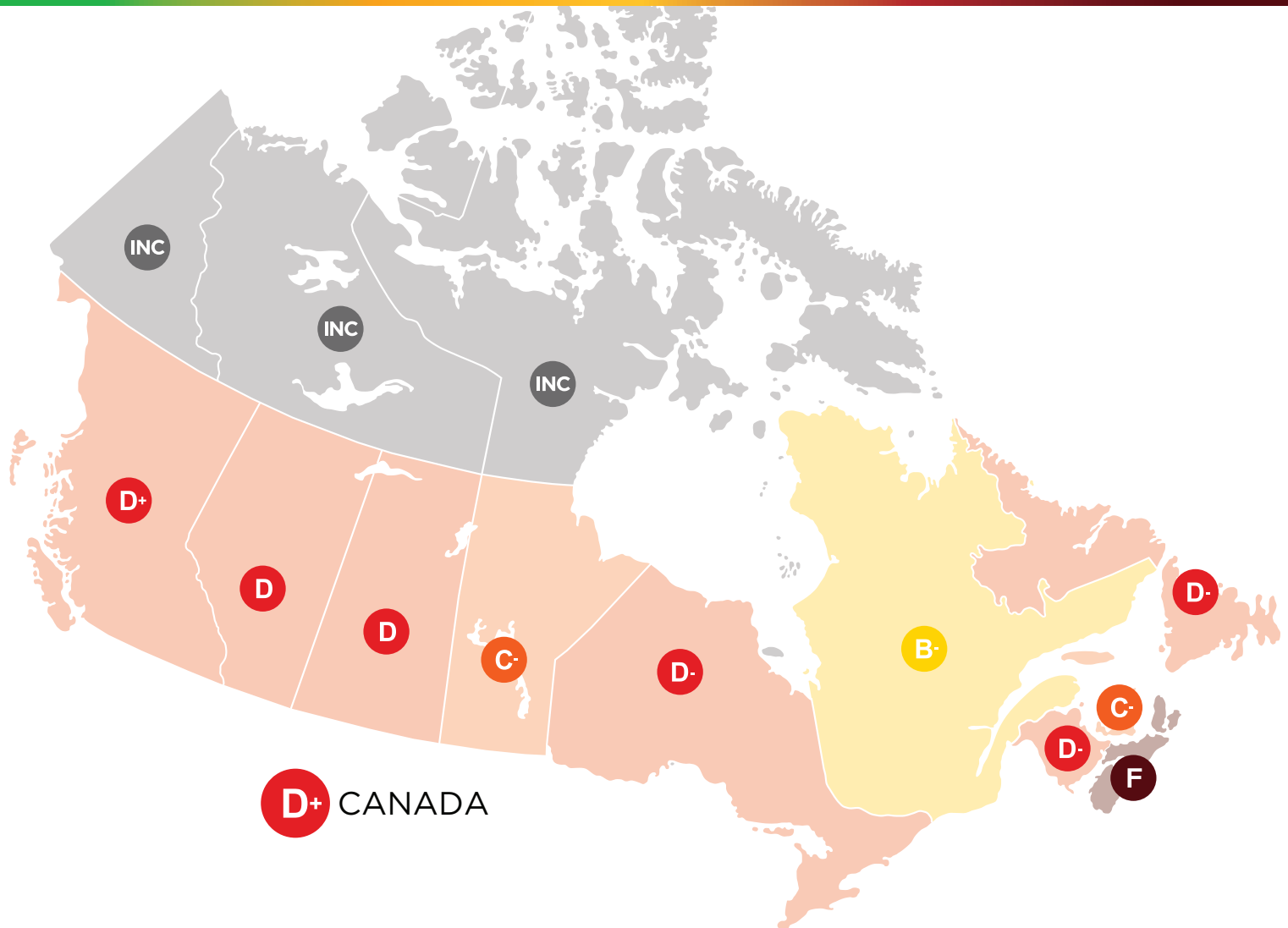
**23%**

of premature deaths  
among Canadians  
can be linked to  
income inequality

The link between poverty and a range of health problems has been widely established in studies in both Canada and the United States. Poverty not only affects people's access to basic needs (i.e., quality food and housing) but also limits their ability to fully participate in society and restricts their freedoms. For example, it has been estimated that 23% of premature deaths among Canadians can be linked to income inequality. As regards mental health and addiction, countless studies have shown that the inability to meet one's basic needs and fully participate in society and exercise one's freedom causes stress and strain, very often leading to depression and anxiety. The effects of poverty on mental health and vice versa are further exacerbated by inadequate access to primary health care and community mental health services. Given that low income is a determinant of health, historically marginalized and disadvantaged groups are particularly vulnerable to experiencing poor physical health and mental illness. Racialized (38%) and Indigenous people (46%) report that their mental health affects their ability to find employment, work effectively, or maintain their finances. These rates are significantly higher than the national average (28%). While addiction is less of a problem among racialized groups, Indigenous communities and individuals (66% compared to 51% nationally) disproportionately experience addiction, even though Indigenous populations say they now have better support for mental health and/or addiction policies (+6%).

The data clearly shows that poverty is not simply a matter of falling on hard times or lacking basic resources. If that were the case, poverty would be experienced at similar levels across society. Rather, poverty disproportionately affects marginalized groups and communities because of underlying and systemically embedded social inequities. At its core, eliminating poverty in Canada requires addressing systemic inequities and revising the social norms, processes, policy decisions, and legislations that have created and perpetuated them.

# NATIONAL OVERVIEW



These grades represent how well poverty reduction efforts are going in the provincial, territorial, and federal governments. As poverty is the result of many factors, including the cost of housing and everyday needs, to the quality of the social safety net, these Report Cards explore the experience of poverty across Canada and where governments can take steps to improve their social policy.

Provinces and territories are graded based on how they compare with each other on experiences of poverty, measurements of poverty, a standard of living, and government progress on passing anti-poverty legislation. This helps policymakers and advocates compare how governments are doing, see what policies are working well across the country, and have evidence at hand to advocate for effective policies that tackle poverty.

This is a living tool and will be updated annually to track how much progress governments are making in reducing poverty.





# CANADA: AT A GLANCE



## SECTION 1 GRADE: EXPERIENCE OF POVERTY

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
People Feeling Worse off Compared to Last Year	42.6%	C-
People Paying More than 30% of Income on Housing	36.4%	D+
People Having Trouble Accessing Healthcare	18.9%	D
Government Support Recipients Who Say Rates are Insufficient to Keep up with Cost of Living	45.9%	D
Percent of Income Spent on Fixed Costs beyond Housing	56.3%	C-



## SECTION 2 GRADE: POVERTY MEASURES

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
Poverty Rate (MBM)	7.4%	D+
Unemployment Rate	5.0%	D+
Food Insecurity Rate	18.4%	C



## SECTION 3 GRADE: MATERIAL DEPRIVATION

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
Severely Inadequate Standard of Living	12.3%	D+
Inadequate Standard of Living	29.1%	D-



## SECTION 4 GRADE: LEGISLATIVE PROGRESS

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
Legislative Progress	N/A	D

# CANADA

CONTEXT

CONTRIBUTING  
FACTORS

POLITICAL AND  
POLICY LANDSCAPE

LOOKING  
AHEAD

POLICY  
RECOMMENDATIONS

REPORT  
CARD



## CONTEXT

The Canadian poverty landscape is influenced by a diverse range of contexts, including social, economic, and demographic trends.

**Housing Affordability** – From the nation’s major urban centres such as Vancouver and Toronto to more rural remote communities, housing affordability is a significant issue that is affecting millions of Canadians’ standard of living, but particularly those living near and below the poverty line. Skyrocketing housing costs make it nearly impossible for individuals and families with low incomes to find adequate and affordable housing.

**Indigenous Poverty** – The data is clear: Indigenous peoples experience higher rates of poverty than non-Indigenous Canadians. Systemic discrimination, the legacy of the residential school system, and limited access to employment opportunities all play a major role in this concerning reality. Indigenous leaders have emphasized that curbing Indigenous poverty is integral to improving health and social outcomes and essential to advancing reconciliation.

**Income Inequality** – According to experts, financial inequality in Canada has been steadily rising for the past two decades. Beyond raising important questions about social justice and fairness, rampant financial inequality means people struggle to make ends meet and cannot share in the benefits of economic growth. One indication of how inequality is presenting new challenges is that food banks are seeing record-high numbers despite unemployment being the lowest on record.

**Changing Demographics** – Canada’s population is rapidly aging, and a growing number of senior citizens are projected to rely on government programs like Guaranteed Income Supplements (GIS) and Old Age Security (OAS). At the same time, increasing immigration targets mean large numbers of newcomers will be coming to Canada and finding themselves in a challenging labour market and dealing with rising costs of living. This has the potential to dramatically increase poverty rates.

While the examples above are not an exhaustive account of Canada’s poverty landscape, any effort to address poverty in Canada must foreground these contexts and trends.

# CANADA

## CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

Poverty in Canada is a long-standing issue, and it has recently been exacerbated by various external and internal factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the affordable housing crisis, and inflation. The multitude of challenges facing the Canadian population has led to **43% of Canadians indicating that they feel financially worse off than they did a year prior.**

**The COVID-19 Pandemic** – The pandemic deepened the financial struggles of vulnerable populations, including marginalized groups, low-wage and precarious workers, and people living in areas where average incomes are low. Furthermore, it brought to the forefront the importance of having strong and accessible social support programs that can provide basic necessities such as housing, food, and health care.

**Global Food Crisis** – The crisis in the global food system, which started during the pandemic and worsened in part because of the invasion of Ukraine, affected the production and trade of essential crops such as wheat, corn, and soy, leading to higher food prices for Canadians. It also led to food shortages in some regions, making it more difficult for people to access affordable and nutritious food.

**43%**

of Canadians feel financially worse off than they did in 2022

**56%**

of income is being dedicated to fixed costs outside of housing

**22%**

of Canadians couldn't afford to cover an unexpected cost of \$500

**47%**

of Canadians think there is a need to expand social security benefits

**Russia's Invasion of Ukraine** – Russia's invasion of Ukraine has also caused gas prices to soar, putting an even greater burden on people who rely on their vehicles to get to and from work.

**Affordable Housing Crisis** – Housing has been among the top issues in Canada for several years. As the cost of housing skyrocketed through the pandemic, the situation went from bad to worse. Average rent prices in Canada are now over \$2000 a month, representing an increase of more than 20% in the last two years. And while housing prices are also rising (now well above a national average of \$700,000), renters are struggling significantly, and too little is being done to help them. **Nearly 70% of food bank clients live in rental housing**, which indicates a severe struggle with food insecurity amongst low-income individuals who rent. Beyond food bank clients, 31% of the general population agrees that it's hard to keep up with the cost of rent.

Across Canada, **36% of the country is paying more than 30% of their income on housing** and 13% are paying more than 50% of their income to keep a roof over their heads. These rates are unacceptable and demonstrate that the amount people pay towards housing is taking up too much of a household's budget.

# CANADA

**Inflation and the Cost of Living** – Inflation has also been a major cause of financial worry and stress for Canadians, particularly people who have low incomes and those experiencing poverty. It has been caused by a combination of factors, including supply chain disruptions, higher energy costs, and speculation. These factors have all contributed to the rising cost of goods and services, making it more difficult for individuals and families to make ends meet.

As the cost of living rises and people's wages remain stagnant, there is less money to pay for fixed costs like groceries, housing, and transportation. For households with incomes below \$75,000 annually, as much as **56% of income is being dedicated to fixed costs outside of housing**. As mentioned previously, with so many Canadians spending an additional 30% or 50% of their income on housing, many families would have to spend well over 100% of their income just for the bare necessities.

Incomes are so stretched that roughly **22% of Canadians couldn't afford to cover an unexpected cost of \$500 and 9% cannot pay their bills on time**. Moreover, reducing the cost of groceries and utilities are 2 of the top 3 issues for Canadians at 95% and 85% agreement respectively.

With all of these issues present, more Canadians are relying on government support systems to help keep them out of poverty. Unfortunately, 40% of Canadians find the tax system difficult to navigate and don't know which benefits they are eligible for. For those receiving benefits, 46% report that the rates are not high enough to help them keep up with the cost of living. With that, **47% of Canadians think there is a need to expand social security benefits**.

## POLITICAL AND POLICY LANDSCAPE

Canada has made significant strides in reducing poverty since 2015. According to the 2021 [Canadian Income Survey](#) released by Employment and Social Development Canada in May 2023, the poverty rate has substantially decreased, from 14.5% in 2015 to 7.4% in 2021. This represents the largest five-year decrease since 1976. The drop can be attributed to the swath of government programs made available to Canadians since 2015. The number of Canadians aged 15 and over who received government transfers in 2020 rose to 84%, a notable increase from the 69% reported in 2015. These government programs included a range of benefits, such as OAS/ GIS, Canada Pension Plan (CPP)/Quebec Pension Plan (QPP) benefits, EI benefits, and child benefits.

In 2018, the Government of Canada released [Opportunity for All: Canada's First Poverty Reduction Strategy](#). The goal of the strategy was to reduce the poverty rate in Canada by 50% by 2030. The federal government has also taken various measures to address poverty and income inequality, including, during the pandemic, implementing social support programs such as the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) and the Canada Recovery Benefit (CRB).

The government has also pledged to increase investments in affordable housing, infrastructure, and social programs. In response to the inflation crisis, the Bank of Canada has raised interest rates to combat inflation, and the government has promised to take further measures to support Canadians with low incomes. In its 2023 budget, the federal government proposed modest measures to address the inflation crisis. To help Canadians deal with the challenge of the rising cost of groceries, the government introduced a \$2.5 billion one-time "grocery rebate" for eligible residents.

# CANADA

In real terms, eligible couples with two children received up to \$467 delivered through the Canada Revenue Agency, single Canadians without children up to \$234, and seniors an average of \$225. While this addresses the short-term concern, experts are predicting a continuous rise in food prices over the next year. More needs to be done to ensure food remains affordable for all Canadians.

## LOOKING AHEAD

The impact of COVID-19 continues to be felt in Canada, with vulnerable populations still struggling to make ends meet. The crisis in the global food system following the invasion of Ukraine is expected to continue, leading to higher prices for essential goods. While inflation is expected to decrease in the coming months, the government will need to continue to implement long-term solutions to address poverty and income inequality, including expanding accessible social support programs and investments in affordable housing and infrastructure.

Finally, Canada's changing demographics and immigration patterns mean there will be greater potential for poverty to rise in the coming years. By anticipating these developments and crafting bold new policies and targeted programs that address the root causes of poverty, policymakers can ensure that Canada's future is one in which all Canadians have the support and access to resources they need to achieve economic stability.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

### Improving the Adequacy of Supports for Those in Need

1. Given the potential uncertainty of the timeline for Bill C-22 (now with Royal Assent) and a possible upcoming federal election at some point over the next 12–24 months, all parties should commit to working collaboratively with whomever is in government to bring a final benefit in to place no later than early 2025, regardless of the timing of an election. It will be crucial to develop the benefit with implementation in mind to avoid any slowdown in the work needed within the public service should it be implemented during or around a federal election.
  - a. The ultimate Canada Disability Benefit (CDB) design should provide adequate payments that are in parity with similar robust benefits like seniors benefits, and ideally should provide value equal or above the MBM line.
  - b. In defining the MBM line for people with disabilities, the government and Statistics Canada should study and account for the impact of inflation and higher costs of care and basic needs on people with disabilities.
2. Since the onset of the pandemic, the federal government has provided multiple one-time top-ups to the GST tax credit and other tax-related programs either to help Canadians avoid loss of income during the pandemic or to address the subsequent affordability challenges resulting from inflation and the economic restart. The government should make a clear commitment that these supports will continue until inflation has returned to the 2% target.
  - a. Having made these payments on a one-off basis over the last four tax years, the government should assess the impact the payments have had on various demographic groups. This should inform future work on how to improve tools such as the Canada Child Benefit and Canada Workers Benefit. Finally, the findings should be used for broader objectives to make the poverty reduction progress experienced during the pandemic permanent.

# CANADA

3. In the short term, allow all households with low incomes to have access to the non-cash benefits that are currently only available to those on social assistance (e.g., childcare subsidies, affordable housing supplements, drug and dental insurance).
4. Make single adults with a low income a priority consideration in all future poverty reduction measures, including an expanded and modernized EI, to ensure that this population is no longer left behind.
  - a. As part of this, the government should set a clear timetable for when it will bring forward EI modernization reforms, which have been continually promised since the 2020 Speech from the Throne.
5. As the federal and provincial Ministers of Health move forward with shared federal health priorities, as outlined in the funding framework agreed to earlier this year, further work is required to develop new mental health measures that include a specific focus on the impact of low incomes on mental health and the acute needs of single working-age adults, people with disabilities, and people living with addictions.
6. Ensure all federal benefits are indexed to inflation and that agreements with provincial governments explicitly forbid claw-backs of provincial social supports for new federal benefit programs.

## Affordable Housing

1. Examine the potential for a national rent supplement program, delivered collaboratively with the provinces and territories as part of the federal-provincial housing agreements.
  - a. A model based on Manitoba's Rent Assist program should be considered.
2. The federal government should fulfill its promise to develop tools that address the costs of housing, including a review of the tax treatment of residential real estate investment trusts and other large corporate owners.
  - a. As part of this work, the government should consider options to preserve or limit tax benefits to help establish conditions that deepen affordability for those currently paying market rent and/or provide guidelines on rent increases and renovations.
3. Leveraging its inventory of public lands, and working in collaboration with municipalities and provincial governments, the federal government should set a target for opening up properties for the possible conversion or development of affordable housing. As part of this, it should consider innovative approaches such as using Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Canada Lands Company, or similar entities, to assess the potential for a public development corporation that would enable governments to fully leverage their balance sheet, reduce the cost of construction, and in turn make housing more affordable. Establish a national acquisition fund that complements the recently announced Housing Accelerator Fund to support community-targeted funding for the acquisition of affordable housing. In other words, provide capital funding (loans and grants) to non-profits so they can purchase and provide rental properties at or below the median market rent.



# CANADA

4. Introduce new investments to help address an important omission of the National Housing Strategy and build supportive housing for people with mental and physical health disabilities, particularly among populations that are marginalized or living on low incomes.
5. Work with the provinces and territories to develop targeted and coordinated tax policies to spur the development of purpose-built market rental housing. Access to tax benefits should be conditional on clearly set national targets for affordability associated with these projects.

## Workers with Low Incomes

1. Develop a new program within EI that specifically supports older workers (aged 45–65) who lose employment at a later age and who may need specific training and education programs to help them re-enter the modern workforce.
2. Permanently broaden the EI qualifying definition of “employment” to include self-employed and precarious work.
3. Review and reduce the number of qualifying “hours of employment” needed (currently between 420 and 700 hours of insurable employment) to better reflect the nature of modern jobs and working situations.
  - a. Include a specific stream for seasonal workers who may work as few as 12–16 weeks a year.
4. Immediately expand the Working-While-on-Claim (WWC) provisions in EI to allow workers to retain more of their income from temporary/part-time work while on EI without losing benefits or having their income clawed back.
5. Extend the maximum duration of EI benefits beyond 45 weeks to 52 weeks, followed by a staggered reduction in cash benefits while retaining access to non-cash EI supports (such as training and education) so that people are not forced into our broken and grossly inadequate provincial social assistance system once their EI benefits run out.
6. Work with the provinces and territories to reduce the claw-backs and improve harmony between social assistance and EI.
7. To better support workers who are currently employed and have a low income:
  - a. Improve the Canada Workers Benefit (CWB) by increasing the maximum payout, especially for those earning below the poverty line and ensure this integrates effectively with similar provincial tax credits such as Ontario’s Low-Income Individuals and Families Tax Credit (LIFT) and others.
  - b. Introduce government incentives to encourage businesses to pay living wages to all employees.

## Northern and Remote Food Insecurity and Poverty

1. Since 2015 the government has twice revised the Northern Residents Deduction (NRD) to assist people in the North with the high cost of living. While this is a welcome step, as a tax deduction it is most beneficial to those with higher incomes. The federal government should examine options for how the NRD can be transformed into a progressive and refundable design, which will better help those in need and reduce poverty in areas where it is highest, while maintaining a basic degree of assistance for all Northerners in recognition of the differential cost of living. If developed properly, this could be the basis for a regional minimum income floor.
2. In collaboration with Indigenous communities and organizations, initiate a comprehensive review of Nutrition North Canada to determine why the program is only minimally achieving its objectives of reducing the cost of food in the North.
3. Working in partnership with local groups, create a Canada-wide Northern development and revitalization plan that is focused on the research and development of regional programs that aim to train workers and grow commerce in strategic economic sectors like tourism, natural resources, and local/regional business.
  - a. As part of this plan, work with territorial and Indigenous governments to develop a long-term community infrastructure vision that will close gaps in access to housing, food production, and broadband Internet to ensure a degree of parity with the standard of living that Canadians in the south enjoy.
4. Develop funding for a national program of community-based representatives whose focus is on connecting their communities to funds and resources that are available to communities in the North, yet too often go unused for lack of awareness. These representatives will provide an opportunity for knowledge sharing between communities across the North.
5. As part of the federal government's Critical Minerals Strategy, there must be a clear focus on the development of community infrastructure in northern communities such as housing, educational institutions, and broadband Internet; the localization of economic and community benefits so that local residents benefit from these projects; and the development of incentives and strategies to retain capital in the North and reduce the reliance on temporary workers.
6. Offer additional training for remote work skills and funding for the procurement of work-from-home supplies.





# CANADA: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 1 GRADE: EXPERIENCE OF POVERTY

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE	METHODOLOGY
People Feeling Worse off Compared to Last Year	12.3%	C-	This grade is based on the percentage of respondents who indicated they are financially worse-off compared to one year prior. The grade was given a weight of 25/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
People Paying More than 30% of Income on Housing	36.4%	D+	This grade is based on the percentage of respondents who indicated they are spending 30% or more of their income on housing. The grade was given a weight of 25/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
People Having Trouble Accessing Healthcare	18.9%	D	This grade is based on the percentage of respondents who indicated they 'somewhat disagree' or 'strongly disagree' with the statement 'I can access and receive healthcare anytime I need to' AND stated the reason was due to one or more of the following reasons: 'I can't take time off work'; 'I don't have healthcare coverage'; 'I don't have money for medication'. The grade was given a weight of 10/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Government Support Recipients Who Say Rates are Insufficient to Keep up with Cost of Living	45.9%	D	This grade is based on the percentage of individuals who indicated that they 'personally receive some form of social security benefit or support' AND indicated that 'social assistance rates aren't high enough to help me keep up with the cost of living'. The grade was given a weight of 25/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Percent of Income Spent on Fixed Costs beyond Housing	56.3%	C-	This grade is based on the combination of results from several questions asking the average amount individuals spend on fixed costs like internet, transport, groceries, and utilities. The average amounts spent were converted into a portion of income for those earning \$75,000 a year or less (given in a range from lowest to highest). This number is the higher end of the range provided. The grade was given a weight of 15/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).

## SECTION 1: CONTEXT

Canada received an overall grade of D+ in the Experience of Poverty Section.

As the Canadian grades are largely influenced by the performance of the provinces, the report card for Canada will tend towards the average. As such, none of the grades in this section stand out as particularly worse or better than other governments.

Despite that, two in five Canadians are reporting that they feel worse off than they did a year ago.

Nearly the same number of people must pay more than 30% of their income on housing, which leaves little money left at the end of the month for other fixed costs.

Fixed costs are also taking up large portions of people's incomes, which combined with the high cost of housing, add significant stress to household budgets.



# CANADA: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 2 GRADE: **POVERTY MEASURES**

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE	METHODOLOGY
Poverty Rate (MBM)	7.4%		The poverty rate (MBM) is based on data from the Statistics Canada 2021 Canadian Income Survey <a href="#">table</a> showing poverty and low income statistics by selected demographic characteristics. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 40/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Unemployment Rate	5.0%		This grade is based on Statistics Canada's <a href="#">Labour force characteristics by province</a> , monthly adjusted. This data is from March 2023. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 20/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Food Insecurity Rate	18.4%		This grade is based on the combination of Marginal, Moderate, and Severe food insecurity rates for all persons in 2022 from the Statistics Canada's <a href="#">Canadian Income Survey (CIS)</a> (2021). The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 40/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).

## SECTION 2: **CONTEXT**

Canada received an overall grade of C- in the Poverty Measures Section.

As the Canadian grades are largely influenced by the performance of the provinces, the report card for Canada will tend towards the average. As such, none of the grades in this section stand out as particularly worse or better than other governments.

With that said, food insecurity is rising quickly across Canada, and will need to be addressed urgently before numbers continue to rise beyond one in five Canadians.

Considering the federal government has had significant influence on the rate of poverty in the past, it can and should have a significant role to play moving forward. Much like the positive impacts of the Canada Child Benefit, the Canada Disability Benefit and other new measures must be introduced to reduce poverty and food insecurity in the country.



# CANADA: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 3 GRADE: MATERIAL DEPRIVATION

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE	METHODOLOGY
Severely Inadequate Standard of Living	12.3%	D+	This grade is based on the % of individuals who were unable to afford 5 or more items from a list of items considered necessary for an adequate standard of living. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 60/100. Grades were determined using a grading scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Inadequate Standard of Living	29.1%	D-	This grade is based on the % of individuals who were unable to afford 2 or more items from a list of items considered necessary for an adequate standard of living. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 40/100. Grades were determined using a grading scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).

### SECTION 3: CONTEXT

\*A material deprivation index (MDI) is a measure that assesses the extent to which individuals lack access to a list of basic needs. Someone who can afford all items on this list would be living an adequate standard of living. This index allows us to gauge a person's level of economic well-being without looking at income.

Canada received a D grade in this section. Unfortunately, almost one third of the people living in Canada are missing two or more items that are considered necessary for a decent standard of living.

Across the country, the most common items that people are unable to afford are the ability to:

- Pay for an unexpected expense of \$500 from their own resources.
- Repair or replace broken or damaged furniture.
- Repair or replace broken or damaged electronic goods (ie. Refrigerator, washing machine, laptop).
- Spend a small amount of money on themselves each week.



# CANADA: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 4 GRADE: LEGISLATIVE PROGRESS

INDICATOR TITLE

GRADE

Legislative Progress



### SECTION 4: CONTEXT

Across the country, Canadians are facing two significant challenges that are driving poverty rates. First is the housing crisis, which is affecting both major cities and small communities. The second is the rapid surge in inflation, which is leading to sharply rising living costs. These issues have not only brought more Canadians into poverty and food insecurity but also exacerbated existing inequalities. Many Indigenous Peoples; racialized Canadians; people living in rural, remote or northern communities; people with disabilities; renters; and young people were already grappling with the cost of living prior to this spike. Their difficulties have now been intensified. Government actions this year need to reflect this situation.

Across the country, the most common items that people are unable to afford are the ability to:

- [Raising the federal minimum wage](#) from \$15.55/hour to \$16.65/hour.
- Announcing several investments to bring high-speed Internet to more than 100,000 households across the country.
- Committing \$287.1 million [for affordable urban, rural, and northern Indigenous housing](#).
- Introducing a new tax-free [First Home Savings Account](#).
- Offering a one-time [Grocery Rebate](#) payment for low- and modest-income Canadians; providing couples with two children with up to \$467, single adults with \$234, and seniors with an average of \$225
- Moving forward on the [Canada Disability Benefit](#) legislation
- Changing the application structure of the [Canada Workers Benefit](#),
- Investing more than \$238 million in mental health support.
- Committing to launching the Canada Dental Care Plan by the end of 2023, with a \$13 billion investment over five years.
- Supporting 60 projects to help [improve access to jobs and workplace accessibility](#) for Canadians with disabilities, through the Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities (OF).
- Permanently [eliminating interest](#) on Canada Student Loans and Canada Apprentice Loans.

Housing is at the heart of the Canadian affordability crisis. However, the federal government has taken no significant action and announced no new commitments to resolving the crisis. As Canada is in need of 5.8 million homes – [2 million of which must be purpose-built rentals](#) – by 2030, the federal government must take a leadership role to see this through.

The federal government’s actions this year have not been nearly enough to respond to the magnitude of the challenges.



# CANADA: REPORT CARD

Prior to the pandemic and recent rise in inflation, Canada had significantly reduced poverty rates through decisive action and introducing new supports that benefited families and individuals across the country. However, this year it has yet to introduce legislation or a comprehensive plan that reflects the gravity of the situation.

For the above reasons, Canada received a D for this section. The government has taken some minor steps to address poverty by taking the next step towards a Canada Disability Benefit, along with a commitment to a new Canada Dental Care Plan. However, it has largely failed to pass legislation that substantially addresses key drivers of poverty, in particular housing and reforms to EI. If the trend continues, Canadians financial circumstances will likely worsen.

Food Banks  
Canada



Banques alimentaires  
Canada

D+

2023  
POVERTY REPORT CARD ANALYSIS

BRITISH COLUMBIA



# BRITISH COLUMBIA: AT A GLANCE



## SECTION 1 GRADE: EXPERIENCE OF POVERTY

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
People Feeling Worse off Compared to Last Year	47.0%	D-
People Paying More than 30% of Income on Housing	39.1%	F
People Having Trouble Accessing Healthcare	14.2%	C-
Government Support Recipients Who Say Rates are Insufficient to Keep up with Cost of Living	57.3%	F
Percent of Income Spent on Fixed Costs beyond Housing	53.6%	B-



## SECTION 2 GRADE: POVERTY MEASURES

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
Poverty Rate (MBM)	8.8%	F
Social Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line (Singles)	42%	D-
Disability Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line	62%	D+
Unemployment Rate	4.5%	C-
Food Insecurity Rate	16.8%	B-



## SECTION 3 GRADE: MATERIAL DEPRIVATION

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
Severely Inadequate Standard of Living	11.3%	D+
Inadequate Standard of Living	27.6%	D



## SECTION 4 GRADE: LEGISLATIVE PROGRESS

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
Legislative Progress	N/A	C

# BRITISH COLUMBIA

CONTEXT

CONTRIBUTING  
FACTORS

POLITICAL AND  
POLICY LANDSCAPE

LOOKING  
AHEAD

POLICY  
RECOMMENDATIONS

REPORT  
CARD



## CONTEXT

BC has been a leader in poverty reduction since 2016, and overall has surpassed gains made at the national level. This is true for both the province as a whole and among particular target groups, such as families with children. Despite this success, poverty rates in BC remain above the national average, in part because of the high cost of housing and consumer goods. BC needs to maintain its status as a leader in the fight against poverty, and it has many opportunities to do so in the coming year.

## CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

**An Impossible Housing Market** – The BC housing market is the most unaffordable in the country, and a lack of affordable housing has become a key characteristic of the province. Prices for renting and buying far exceed average incomes, which means more people are spending beyond their means on housing. For example, **40% of residents spend more than 30% of their monthly income on housing costs.** With so much money going towards housing, over 70% of food bank clients in British Columbia are renters. This is a telling sign that the costs of housing, for renters in particular, are a big factor in the rising food insecurity rates in the province.

Despite the concerning costs of rent, **only 5% of individuals in the province receive some kind of housing support, compared to 11% nationally.** This indicates that housing supports may not be accessible enough for those who need them.

**Cost of Living Beyond Housing** – Many BC residents who live on low incomes are spending as much as 54% of their income on fixed costs like Internet, groceries, and transportation. Paired with the large numbers of residents paying more than 30% of their income on housing, there is little money left at the end of the month to feel financially secure.



# BRITISH COLUMBIA

For those who are struggling financially, social assistance may come as a last resort. Among BC residents receiving social assistance, **57% state that their rates are not high enough to keep up with the cost of living.** Despite the province offering some of the highest social assistance rates in the country, **at best, single adults are receiving amounts that are less than half of the poverty line.** People living with a disability or who have children receive more support, but it is still far from the bare minimum needed.

**Mental Health Fallout** – BC is struggling deeply with mental health problems and addictions. **Nearly half of the province’s residents feel worse off than they did last year,** which may be increasing stress levels and negatively affecting mental health. A vast majority of individuals (65%) in the province state that addiction is an issue in their community that needs to be addressed. Half of the province believes that addiction is not getting the attention it needs and that people facing mental health or addictions issues need more and better support.

**40%**

of BC residents spend more than 30% of their monthly income on housing

**57%**

indicate their rates are not high enough to keep up with the cost of living

**38%**

of racialized individuals in BC struggle to access stable employment

**65%**

in the province state that addiction is an issue in their community

**Sociodemographic Considerations\*** – One in four respondents in a racialized community agreed that it was **difficult to access needed social services,** compared to one in five across the province.

Meanwhile, **low wages are affecting almost 40% of those in racialized communities** from making ends meet. This represents a nine percentage point increase from 30% across the province. Part of this issue may be exacerbated by the challenges that racialized individuals are facing with **accessing stable employment – 38% compared to 25% across the province.**

Beyond that, individuals in racialized communities in BC are more likely to spend 30% to 50% of their income on housing (+4 percentage points) and are more likely to feel financially worse off compared to the year before (+4 percentage points).

\*British Columbia is one of three provinces with a large enough sample size to report on racialized communities in our survey.

# BRITISH COLUMBIA

## POLITICAL AND POLICY LANDSCAPE

As BC's premier, David Eby inherited the challenge of handling the ongoing poverty crisis, which as experts have highlighted, requires careful balancing of both short and long-term planning. In other words, tackling the immediate needs of poverty should not distract from the implementation of long-term solutions.

In 2018, the provincial government introduced a number of long-term strategies, including its poverty strategy, [TogetherBC](#), an [affordable housing plan](#), wage increases, and an [Expert Panel on Basic Income](#).

While the Expert Panel recommended against a basic income system, the extensive analysis and research work it undertook serves as a major blueprint for how to reduce poverty in BC and beyond. Since the panel issued its final [report](#), the BC government has actioned some of its recommendations and continues to study others.

With the province experiencing higher than average childcare and housing costs, a series of actions were taken to reduce the resulting burden being faced by residents in BC. Between the federal government's action on childcare and the provincial governments various other actions (mainly the [B.C. Family Benefit](#)), child poverty and poverty at large plummeted in the province.

Unlike many other provinces, BC has more than doubled its public investments in affordable housing since 2019, and it has recently created a \$500 million Rental Protection Fund to help provide capital funding to acquire and preserve rental housing stock. In addition, developers are significantly increasing the proportion of purpose-built rental housing compared to other forms of housing, which is contributing to a much-needed increase in the availability of affordable rental housing.

## LOOKING AHEAD

Local experts believe that to address poverty effectively, the provincial government must:

- improve accessibility to, and availability of affordable housing, and
- address the provincial mental health and addictions crisis.

In addition, local experts are urging the government to focus on prioritizing the needs of key groups, including Indigenous peoples, sex workers, people experiencing homelessness, and migrant workers. This would allow the government to address the most pressing needs and significantly reduce poverty across the province.

While many programs and initiatives currently in place are helpful in addressing short-term policy gaps, they are not leading to meaningful progress toward enabling people to permanently move out of poverty. To make a real impact and establish long-term initiatives, experts suggest that politicians must be willing to step back and invest political capital in long-term initiatives that might not benefit them directly.

Unfortunately, the provincial [2023 budget](#) fell short of expectations. While the province is taking steps to address poverty in BC, it could be doing more to address the underlying reasons behind the unaffordability crisis. The budget finally introduced the new income-tested renter's tax credit, which was first mentioned in 2017.

# BRITISH COLUMBIA

However, while households with an adjusted income of up to \$60,000 will appreciate the \$400 annual tax credit, it will do very little to stop skyrocketing rents and create sustainable affordable housing.

The budget did provide some hope for people receiving income and disability assistance, as the shelter rate was increased by \$125 monthly. This was the first increase in the shelter rate since 2007. The budget also included \$867 million for mental health, addictions, and treatment services, and as of July 1, 2023, the BC family benefit amounts, which are calculated based on adjusted family net income and the number of children under the age of 18 in the family, will be permanently increased.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

### Accountability

#### 1. Produce a progress update on the 65 recommendations tabled in 2020 by the Expert Panel on Basic Income

As we near three years since the report's release, it is time to step back and assess what has changed. An update on the status of recommendations, and a formal response to each one, would be helpful for assessing next steps for poverty reduction reform across the province. We recommend the provincial government produce a results report by the end of 2023.

#### 2. Set the goal of bringing poverty to below the national rate in every category by 2026

As we near three years since the report's release, it is time to step back and assess what has changed. An update on the status of recommendations, and a formal response to each one, would be helpful for assessing next steps for poverty reduction reform across the province. We recommend the provincial government produce a results report by the end of 2023.

### Affordable Housing

#### 3. Enhance the Renter's Tax Credit

As confirmed in Budget 2023, residents with low and moderate incomes will be able to access the newly created Renter's Tax Credit as of 2024, which will provide up to \$400 per year in direct cash support. While this is a welcome development in concert with stricter provincial rent control, the credit itself has been in development for several years, during which time housing cost pressures have continued to mount. The average cost of rented accommodation in Victoria, for example, increased 26% in the five years between March 2018 and March 2023, while the promised \$400 credit has remained the same since it was first promised in 2017. With the expiry of the one-time top-ups to the Canada Housing Benefit, low- and moderate-income renters in BC will actually receive less support next year when the Renter's Tax Credit launches than the combined cash assistance they were entitled to in 2022.

We therefore recommend the province increase the Renter's Tax Credit to a maximum of \$600 in 2024, with future increases tied to the rate of shelter cost inflation in BC.

# BRITISH COLUMBIA

## **4. Continue to invest in the construction of affordable rental housing and make the BC Rental Protection Fund permanent**

To build on the affordable housing momentum, the province should:

- a. Make the Rental Construction Fund a permanent feature in future budgets so that non-profit housing providers can plan and develop projects strategically
- b. Work with the federal government to develop Indigenous-specific housing funding streams and an associated provincial strategy focused on the unique and culturally relevant affordable housing and homelessness programming needs of Indigenous communities throughout the province
- c. Coordinate with the federal government on the development of tax-related incentives to support the construction of more purpose-built rental accommodation with greater incentives for building housing that is more affordable and supportive.

## **Adequate and Livable Income Support**

### **5. Index all provincial social benefits and credits and increase help for single people**

In the last several years, the BC government has made significant investments to help families with the costs of raising a child, including the introduction of the enhanced BC Family Benefit. This has significantly contributed to reducing child poverty. However, there has been no similar action to address the distressingly high proportion of British Columbians – for example, nearly 1 in 3 adult women between the ages of 18 and 64 – who are single and live in poverty. As a first step to fix this inequity, the province should raise income assistance rates for single people by at least 10% and then index all provincially administered benefits to inflation the following year. Combined with the recent increase in shelter allowances, these changes and the proposed increase in the Renter Tax Credit would provide nearly \$1,500 in additional assistance, which is similar to the amount families with children receive under the BC Family Benefit.

## **Decent Benefits for Decent Work**

### **6. Earmark future savings from federal investments in school nutrition and dental care to finance expanded worker benefits**

The federal government is currently in the process of designing and implementing a national dental care program and a school food nutrition program. These programs are likely to result in longer-term savings to the provincial health and education systems as a result of improved social determinants of health. The province should use this opportunity to reinvest savings into expanding workplace benefits coverage and extended health coverage for low-income and gig workers. This will increase incentives to work and provide further opportunities to build on BC's leadership in addressing precarious work.

# BRITISH COLUMBIA

## Decent Benefits for Decent Work

### 7. Develop a provincial earnings supplement

Although BC recently increased the earnings exemption for people receiving income assistance, workers with low incomes still face relatively high rates of claw-back of benefits. To reduce this obvious barrier to good, stable employment, BC should examine the cost of introducing a provincial earnings supplement like Ontario's Low-Income Individuals and Families (LIFT) credit and the federal Canada Workers Benefit (CWB). This could be incorporated as a key objective in the next iteration of the province's poverty reduction strategy, with the goal of closing the poverty gap with the rest of Canada.



# BRITISH COLUMBIA: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 1 GRADE: EXPERIENCE OF POVERTY

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE	METHODOLOGY
People Feeling Worse off Compared to Last Year	47.0%	D-	This grade is based on the percentage of respondents who indicated they are financially worse-off compared to one year prior. The grade was given a weight of 25/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
People Paying More than 30% of Income on Housing	39.1%	F	This grade is based on the percentage of respondents who indicated they are spending 30% or more of their income on housing. The grade was given a weight of 20/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
People Having Trouble Accessing Healthcare	14.2%	C-	This grade is based on the percentage of respondents who indicated they 'somewhat disagree' or 'strongly disagree' with the statement 'I can access and receive healthcare anytime I need to' AND stated the reason was due to one or more of the following reasons: 'I can't take time off work'; 'I don't have healthcare coverage'; 'I don't have money for medication'. The grade was given a weight of 10/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Government Support Recipients Who Say Rates are Insufficient to Keep up with Cost of Living	57.3%	F	This grade is based on the percentage of individuals who indicated that they 'personally receive some form of social security benefit or support' AND indicated that 'social assistance rates aren't high enough to help me keep up with the cost of living'. The grade was given a weight of 25/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Percent of Income Spent on Fixed Costs beyond Housing	53.6%	B-	This grade is based on the combination of results from several questions asking the average amount individuals spend on fixed costs like internet, transport, groceries, and utilities. The average amounts spent were converted into a portion of income for those earning \$75,000 a year or less (given in a range from lowest to highest). This number is the higher end of the range provided. The grade was given a weight of 20/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).

## SECTION 1: CONTEXT

British Columbia (BC) received an overall grade of D- in this section.

Among the provinces with the largest populations – that is Ontario, Quebec and BC - BC ranks the worst in the Experience of Poverty section with an overall grade of D-, compared to Ontario's D and Quebec's C.

Notably, BC is performing among the worst nationally when it comes to the Sufficiency of Government Support indicator. This finding is somewhat surprising given BC's higher assistance rates compared to the rest of the country. This finding may indicate a higher cost of living associated with the province.

And while BC performed best among the provinces when examining Percent of Income Spent on Fixed Costs beyond Housing, the gains it makes in this indicator may be outweighed by the high cost of housing.

BC is among the worst of the provinces on housing costs. Nearly 2 in 5 residents spend more than 30% of their income on housing, meaning they experience core housing need. This finding is less surprising, as housing costs in urban regions of BC are among the highest in the country.



# BRITISH COLUMBIA: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 2 GRADE: **POVERTY MEASURES**

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE	METHODOLOGY
Poverty Rate (MBM)	8.8%	F	The poverty rate (MBM) is based on data from the Statistics Canada 2021 Canadian Income Survey <a href="#">table</a> showing poverty and low income statistics by selected demographic characteristics. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 25/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Social Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line (Singles)	42%	D-	This grade is based on the maximum annual social assistance rate (provincial only) for a single unattached individual considered employable compared to the official poverty line of the provincial capital (the Market Basket Measure). The data is from <a href="#">Welfare in Canada 2022</a> , available on Maytree's website. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 15/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Disability Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line	62%	D+	This grade is based on the maximum annual social assistance rate (provincial only) for a single unattached individual with a disability compared to the official poverty line of the provincial capital (the Market Basket Measure). The data is from <a href="#">Welfare in Canada 2022</a> , available on Maytree's website. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 15/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Unemployment Rate	4.5%	C-	This grade is based on Statistics Canada's <a href="#">Labour force characteristics by province</a> , monthly adjusted. This data is from March 2023. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 15/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Food Insecurity Rate	16.8%	B-	This grade is based on the combination of Marginal, Moderate, and Severe food insecurity rates for all persons in 2022 from the Statistics Canada's <a href="#">Canadian Income Survey (CIS)</a> (2021). The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 30/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).

## SECTION 2: **CONTEXT**

BC received a slightly above average grade of D+ in this section. Despite this relatively low grade, BC was outperformed in this section by only one other province: Quebec. This tells us that all the provinces are struggling in these measures of poverty and that Canadians across the country are experiencing high levels of need.

In BC, a significant portion of the population, nearly 9% as of 2021, is living below the official poverty line, as determined by the Market Basket Measure. As a consequence, BC has received an F grade for this indicator, aligning it with other low-performing provinces including Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Nova Scotia.

Beyond BC's disappointing Poverty Rate grade, the province received a passable grade of B- in the Food Insecurity Rate indicator. This was the second highest grade in the country, behind Quebec.

While BC is performing among the best on a comparative scale, 17% of its entire population is still experiencing food insecurity, which is an unacceptable rate. This increasing rate of food insecurity may indicate that poverty rates will soon show increases as well.





# BRITISH COLUMBIA: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 3 GRADE: MATERIAL DEPRIVATION

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE	METHODOLOGY
Severely Inadequate Standard of Living	11.3%	D+	This grade is based on the % of individuals who were unable to afford 5 or more items from a list of items considered necessary for an adequate standard of living. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 60/100. Grades were determined using a grading scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Inadequate Standard of Living	27.6%	D	This grade is based on the % of individuals who were unable to afford 2 or more items from a list of items considered necessary for an adequate standard of living. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 40/100. Grades were determined using a grading scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).

### SECTION 3: CONTEXT

**\*A material deprivation index (MDI) is a measure that assesses the extent to which individuals lack access to a list of basic needs. Someone who can afford all items on this list would be living an adequate standard of living. This index allows us to gauge a person’s level of economic well-being without looking at income.**

Compared to other provinces, BC has a slightly above-average standard of living according to the Material Deprivation Index. It received a D+ for this section.

BC performed similarly to large provinces like Ontario and Quebec, who received a D- and D+ grades respectively.

Still, more than one-quarter of residents in the province are missing two or more indicators that are considered necessary for a decent standard of living.

Across the country, the most common items that people are unable to afford are the ability to:

- Pay for an unexpected expense of \$500 from one’s own resources.
- Repair or replace broken and damaged furniture.
- Repair or replace broken and damaged electronic goods (ie. Refrigerator, washing machine, laptop).
- Spend a small amount of money on oneself each week.





# BRITISH COLUMBIA: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 4 GRADE: LEGISLATIVE PROGRESS

INDICATOR TITLE

GRADE

Legislative Progress



### SECTION 4: CONTEXT

Despite strong commitments to poverty reduction measures, the ripple effect of having the country's most unaffordable housing is putting enormous strain on BC. This year, the province has taken some action to increase the housing supply and to support vulnerable residents.

Notable developments include:

- [Increasing the minimum wage](#) to \$16.75/hour.
- Committing to more affordable housing and reducing bureaucracy:
  - A new housing strategy with a \$4.2 billion budget allocation over the next three years.
  - [2,000 homes over 10 years in Vancouver](#) with the first batch of 660 homes to be built over the next three years.
  - [1,500 affordable units in Burnaby](#).
  - [\\$500 million Rental Protection Fund to fund non-profit housing organizations to purchase](#) affordable residential rental buildings to protect current renters and \$14.8 million to support operations costs of non-profit housing.
  - [New Permitting Strategy for Housing](#) to simplify processes and create a single, coordinated approach to housing-related permits and authorization.
- Investing in food insecurity, including [\\$200 million investment](#) to increase access to affordable local food, [\\$30 million to support Indigenous communities](#) to strengthen local food systems, and \$214 million over three years to support [local school food programs](#).
- Investing \$479 million in [Vancouver public transit](#) and [\\$5M](#) to improve rural and island public transit.
- Providing [\\$1 billion in new mental health and addiction funding](#) over the next three years to improve access to care.
- Enhancing the [BC Family Benefit](#) by up to \$250/year for two-parent households and up to \$750/year for single-parent households.
- Increasing the [Climate action tax credit](#) by up to \$447/year for single adults (up over \$250 from 2022), and up to \$893.50 for a family of four (up \$390 from last year).
- Taking action on employment with [\\$2 million for youth with disabilities](#) transitioning to work, \$90 million over three years for manufacturing jobs in rural, remote and Indigenous communities, and [\\$8.2 million for the Links to Employment program](#) which helps people who face persistent barriers to work.



# BRITISH COLUMBIA: REPORT CARD

Other announcements this year include expansions to Pharma Care medications, support for new-comers, broad supports for people with disabilities, expanding Internet infrastructure, and continuing the [BC Affordability Credit](#) for 2023.

A number of smaller housing projects have also been announced across the province this year. Although these projects encompass a blend of supportive, affordable, and standard rental units, they collectively amount to fewer units than the province needs to effectively tackle affordable housing.

BC has acted on a variety of poverty-contributing issues. But insufficient help with living costs, apart from family aid and climate credits, has left many people, including social assistance recipients to live well below the poverty line. BC will need to ensure that relief for people today is given as much attention as potential long-term solutions.

For the above reasons, BC received a C for this section. While the government has taken a few significant steps to address housing and food insecurity, it has largely failed to pass legislation that substantially addresses key drivers of poverty - in particular social assistance reform. Housing must remain a priority, because if trends continue, economic conditions will likely stagnate or worsen for residents.

Food Banks  
Canada



Banques alimentaires  
Canada



# 2023

POVERTY REPORT CARD ANALYSIS

**ALBERTA**



# ALBERTA: AT A GLANCE



## SECTION 1 GRADE: EXPERIENCE OF POVERTY

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
People Feeling Worse off Compared to Last Year	49.4%	F
People Paying More than 30% of Income on Housing	34.8%	D+
People Having Trouble Accessing Healthcare	15.0%	C-
Government Support Recipients Who Say Rates are Insufficient to Keep up with Cost of Living	48.5%	D-
Percent of Income Spent on Fixed Costs beyond Housing	54.5%	D+



## SECTION 2 GRADE: POVERTY MEASURES

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
Poverty Rate (MBM)	7.8%	D
Social Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line (Singles)	32%	F
Disability Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line	37%	F
Unemployment Rate	5.7%	D
Food Insecurity Rate	21.8%	F



## SECTION 3 GRADE: MATERIAL DEPRIVATION

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
Severely Inadequate Standard of Living	13.8%	D-
Inadequate Standard of Living	29.8%	F



## SECTION 4 GRADE: LEGISLATIVE PROGRESS

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
Legislative Progress	N/A	C

# ALBERTA

CONTEXT

CONTRIBUTING  
FACTORS

POLITICAL AND  
POLICY LANDSCAPE

LOOKING  
AHEAD

POLICY  
RECOMMENDATIONS

REPORT  
CARD



## CONTEXT

Within months of the 2019 United Conservative Party (UCP) settling into government, the COVID-19 pandemic hit Canada. The party experienced internal struggles throughout the first couple years of the pandemic and found a new leader in 2022. During this period (2019-2022), Alberta saw a 73% increase in food bank usage, more than double the national rate of increase and the highest rate in the country. Earlier in 2023, Alberta went through another election, which saw the UCP hold its position as governing party.

Since 2019, with the shifts in parties and leaders, and the consequences of a global pandemic, it seems that Alberta has struggled to settle into a direction on poverty. As the government begins building up from the challenges introduced in the past four years, it will need to direct much attention to helping those who are struggling with these new challenges and to help those who have been struggling for even longer.

## CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

**Mental Health Top of Mind** – Across the province, mental health and work are often pinpointed as key contributors to poverty. Ranking above the national average, **1 in 3 Albertans say that their mental health is impacting their ability to find work, work effectively, or maintain their finances.** The link between work and mental health is not surprising given that half of the province feels they are financially worse off than a year ago. In addition, a staggering **56% say that addiction is an issue in their community** that needs to be addressed.

**Employment Challenges** – Contributing to this mental health challenge is the number of individuals reporting that **low wages are impacting their ability to make ends meet** and that they struggle to access fresh and affordable food. This challenge has resulted in changes to food bank visits. In Alberta, 20% of all food bank visitors' main income source is through employment – this is 6 percentage points higher than the national average, indicating that wages in the province are resulting in more visitors. Moreover, the number of people who cite **difficulty accessing employment opportunities within their community is six percentage points higher than the national average.** Alberta's unemployment rate of 5.7% is one of the highest in the country, as is their long-term unemployment, which makes up nearly 25% of those who are unemployed.

# ALBERTA

**Cost of Living Adding Fuel to the Housing Fire** – It comes as no surprise that the combination of poor mental health and inadequate work has led to a desire to reduce the cost of utilities in Alberta. Residents who live on low incomes are **spending as much as 55% of their income on fixed costs like Internet, groceries, and transportation**. Paired with the large numbers of residents paying more than 30% of their income on housing, there is little money left at the end of the month to feel financially secure.

There is a critical shortage of affordable housing throughout the province. Rental vacancies in Calgary are at their lowest level since 2014, just before the onset of the last commodities recession. Alberta urgently needs to build more affordable rental housing. Construction has not kept pace with population growth in recent years, and less than 5% of the Calgary rental stock is affordable for residents who earn less than \$36,000.

As more Albertans struggle with the cost of housing and basic goods, the number of food bank visitors has continued to rise. Alberta has one of the highest rates of food bank visits in the country, which is a clear sign that more and more families cannot afford to put food on the table.

**73%**

increase in food bank usage in Alberta from 2019 to 2022

**56%**

in the province state that addiction is an issue in their community

**1 IN 3**

Albertans say that their mental health is impacting their ability to work or maintain finances

**5.7%**

unemployment rate in Alberta is one of the highest in the country

## POLITICAL AND POLICY LANDSCAPE

After years of the New Democratic Party (NDP) being in government, the 2019 UCP of Alberta fundamentally reshaped the province's policy landscape. The UCP aimed to roll back some of the social spending introduced by the previous NDP government. This included halting regular increases to the minimum wage and reducing it from \$15 to \$13 for youth workers.

Additionally, the Alberta Child Benefit and the Alberta Family Employment Tax Credit were merged into a single program, the [Alberta Child and Family Benefit](#) (ACFB), in July 2020. [Critics](#) argue that the ACFB provides approximately \$40 million less to Alberta families than the initial separate programs did.

Overall, while some progress has been made through various programs, the Government of Alberta only recently introduced a plan to tackle affordability, the [Affordability Action Plan](#). While early actions show that the plan is leading to legislative changes, time will tell just how effective the program is. In addition, while Alberta introduced a much-needed affordable housing strategy in 2021, progress on this issue is unclear.

# ALBERTA

## LOOKING AHEAD

Local experts believe that to address poverty effectively, the government must:

- fund and create more robust support programs,
- improve accessibility to affordable housing and mental health resources, and
- address concerns related to precarious employment.

Moreover, local experts maintain that policymakers must prioritize groups with specific needs—for example, Indigenous peoples, single earners with low incomes, and children—and that the government must address the lack of mental health resources and promote holistic school nutrition programs across the province.

Alberta's 2023–2024 budget focuses on large investments in health care and education, with minimal investments to reduce poverty and no new initiatives for affordable housing in the province. The budget included increases to social assistance—for example, a 6% increase and indexed to inflation for Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH), Income Support, and Alberta Seniors Benefit, and \$600 over six months to AISH, Income Support, and Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD)—but the increases are nominal given the rising costs of living.

Moving forward, Alberta needs to explore more ways to address the growing mental health and addictions challenges in the province, including health-centred approaches and monetary supports to reduce heavy financial burdens on individuals and families living on low incomes.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

### Accountability

#### 1. Introduce a provincial poverty reduction strategy

While Alberta made significant headway in the reduction of child poverty between 2015 and 2020 (down by 8 percentage points) thanks to its provincial family benefits and the federal Canada Child Benefit, the lack of a comprehensive plan with clear goals and indicators stymies the ability of government and stakeholders to work together with a common vision.

### Affordable Housing

#### 2. Expand the Temporary Rent Assistance Benefit to all Albertans waiting for affordable housing

Approximately 24,000 Albertans are currently waiting for subsidized affordable housing. Thanks to joint federal and provincial funding, the Temporary Rent Assistance Benefit provides up to two years of support of between \$140 and \$340 per month, depending on household size. It is designed to help Albertans who were working but recently became unemployed. To prevent Albertans from falling into poverty or becoming homeless, the program should be expanded to cover all residents on a waitlist for affordable housing.



# ALBERTA

### **3. Dedicate 0.5% of the provincial budget every year to affordable rental housing construction**

To show leadership, we recommend the province establish a Housing Accelerator Fund with dedicated new funding of at least 0.5% of the province's annual operating and capital budget. In 2023 alone, this would provide nearly \$350 million in new construction financing. The funding could be divided across multiple streams to provide a combination of supports to non-profit providers to acquire land and preserve existing rental stock, extend capital subsidies, and provide tax-related incentives to market developers to include a dedicated share of affordable units as part of new projects.

## **Adequate Income Support**

### **4. Transform the \$600 affordability payment into a comprehensive Alberta Family Benefit that supports all working households earning less than \$50,000**

As part of its affordability plan, Alberta previously announced one-time payments of \$600 to families with children and seniors earning less than \$180,000. This plan excluded the poorest residents who are single. The government should make this payment permanent, but as part of a comprehensive earnings supplement for families earning up to twice the poverty line.

### **5. Earmark future savings from federal investments in school nutrition and dental care to finance expanded worker benefits**

Social assistance rates for Albertans who are not permanently disabled are among the least generous in Canada, covering less than 40% of the poverty line for a single person living in Calgary. A future provincial government must take steps to rectify this. Last year, the Alberta government announced a plan to reintroduce benefit indexation, having cancelled indexation upon coming to power in 2019. While this provided a 6% increase in benefit rates starting in January, this only makes up for the recent bout of inflation from 2021 to 2022. A further 6% increase would approximately restore benefits to their previous level and end the inflation tax on the province's poorest residents.

## **Decent Work that Pays**

### **6. Raise the minimum wage to \$17/hour and index it to inflation going forward**

The lowest-paid Albertans have not seen an increase in their minimum wage for five years, even as inflation has increased to its highest point in 40 years. BC increased its minimum wage to \$16.75/hour this summer, so a parallel increase in Alberta's minimum wage would not jeopardize jobs or competitiveness with employers across the region.

### **7. Raise the minimum wage to \$17/hour and index it to inflation going forward**

A job that pays a good, livable wage is one of the most sustainable ways to reduce poverty. Given the province's stated objective in increasing opportunities in the skilled trades and reducing job vacancies, we recommend the provincial government introduce an Alberta Opportunities Award, which would reward Albertans with low incomes on social assistance who seek out pre-apprenticeship training and/or continue on to a full classroom-based training program. In recognition of this commitment, the province would provide a one-time award of up to six months of social assistance support, paid in two instalments, the first upon enrolment and the second after a period of continuous enrolment. This program could be funded in part by the Canada Alberta Job Grant.



# ALBERTA: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 1 GRADE: EXPERIENCE OF POVERTY

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE	METHODOLOGY
People Feeling Worse off Compared to Last Year	49.4%	F	This grade is based on the percentage of respondents who indicated they are financially worse-off compared to one year prior. The grade was given a weight of 25/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
People Paying More than 30% of Income on Housing	34.8%	D+	This grade is based on the percentage of respondents who indicated they are spending 30% or more of their income on housing. The grade was given a weight of 20/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
People Having Trouble Accessing Healthcare	15.0%	C-	This grade is based on the percentage of respondents who indicated they 'somewhat disagree' or 'strongly disagree' with the statement 'I can access and receive healthcare anytime I need to' AND stated the reason was due to one or more of the following reasons: 'I can't take time off work'; 'I don't have healthcare coverage'; 'I don't have money for medication'. The grade was given a weight of 10/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Government Support Recipients Who Say Rates are Insufficient to Keep up with Cost of Living	48.5%	D-	This grade is based on the percentage of individuals who indicated that they 'personally receive some form of social security benefit or support' AND indicated that 'social assistance rates aren't high enough to help me keep up with the cost of living'. The grade was given a weight of 25/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Percent of Income Spent on Fixed Costs beyond Housing	54.5%	C+	This grade is based on the combination of results from several questions asking the average amount individuals spend on fixed costs like internet, transport, groceries, and utilities. The average amounts spent were converted into a portion of income for those earning \$75,000 a year or less (given in a range from lowest to highest). This number is the higher end of the range provided. The grade was given a weight of 20/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).

### SECTION 1: CONTEXT

Alberta received an overall grade of D in this section. A key contributor to this outcome was the People Feeling Worse off Compared to Last Year indicator, with over 49% of respondents reporting they were struggling more financially compared to one year prior. Alberta and Saskatchewan are nearly tied as the second-worst performers in this indicator coming up just behind Nova Scotia's 53%.

Alberta received a C+ in the Percent of Income Spent on Fixed Costs beyond Housing indicator, suggesting that residents, on average, spend less than people in other provinces on fixed costs like Internet, transport, groceries, and utilities as a proportion of their income.

Unfortunately, for those who do struggle with costs, the amount provided through government support is considered insufficient by half of those receiving payments.

Alberta, along with much of the country, is struggling in this section. While it performs slightly better than neighbouring Saskatchewan, Manitoba is doing much better than both. Due to lower Fixed Costs beyond Housing, the cost of living in Alberta is a slightly less pressing an issue than in peer province, Saskatchewan, which received a D for this indicator, but they are outperformed by Manitoba, which received a C-.



# ALBERTA: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 2 GRADE: **POVERTY MEASURES**

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE	METHODOLOGY
Poverty Rate (MBM)	7.8%		The poverty rate (MBM) is based on data from the Statistics Canada 2021 Canadian Income Survey <a href="#">table</a> showing poverty and low income statistics by selected demographic characteristics. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 25/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Social Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line (Singles)	32%		This grade is based on the maximum annual social assistance rate (provincial only) for a single unattached individual considered employable compared to the official poverty line of the provincial capital (the Market Basket Measure). The data is from <a href="#">Welfare in Canada 2022</a> , available on Maytree's website. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 15/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Disability Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line	37%		This grade is based on the maximum annual social assistance rate (provincial only) for a single unattached individual with a disability compared to the official poverty line of the provincial capital (the Market Basket Measure). The data is from <a href="#">Welfare in Canada 2022</a> , available on Maytree's website. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 15/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Unemployment Rate	5.7%		This grade is based on Statistics Canada's <a href="#">Labour force characteristics by province</a> , monthly adjusted. This data is from March 2023. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 15/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Food Insecurity Rate	21.8%		This grade is based on the combination of Marginal, Moderate, and Severe food insecurity rates for all persons in 2022 from the Statistics Canada's <a href="#">Canadian Income Survey (CIS)</a> (2021). The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 30/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).

## SECTION 2: **CONTEXT**

Alberta received an overall grade of D- in this section. Tied with Nova Scotia, it has the lowest Poverty Measures section grade.

While this section highlighted that no province or territory is doing well on poverty measures, Alberta performed notably worse in the social assistance indicators. For both employable single adults and people with a disability, Alberta ranks the worst of the provinces.

Assistance for single adults does not even reach 33% (one-third) of the way to the poverty line and the number for people receiving disability assistance is 37%.

Alberta's disability assistance (BFE) is the worst in the country, with the next worst being New Brunswick's – a province with far fewer resources and much less capital.

Beyond that, food insecurity in the province is also contributing to its overall grade as more than one in five, now approaching one in four people in the province are considered food insecure.



# ALBERTA: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 3 GRADE: MATERIAL DEPRIVATION

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE	METHODOLOGY
Severely Inadequate Standard of Living	13.8%		This grade is based on the % of individuals who were unable to afford 5 or more items from a list of items considered necessary for an adequate standard of living. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 60/100. Grades were determined using a grading scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Inadequate Standard of Living	29.8%		This grade is based on the % of individuals who were unable to afford 2 or more items from a list of items considered necessary for an adequate standard of living. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 40/100. Grades were determined using a grading scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).

### SECTION 3: CONTEXT

**\*A material deprivation index (MDI) is a measure that assesses the extent to which individuals lack access to a list of basic needs. Someone who can afford all items on this list would be living an adequate standard of living. This index allows us to gauge a person's level of economic well-being without looking at income.**

Alberta has a slightly below-average standard of living compared to other provinces according to the Material Deprivation Index. It received a D- for this section.

Alberta is performing worst among the prairie provinces. Manitoba and Saskatchewan received a C and a C- respectively.

Notably, almost one-third of the residents in Alberta are missing two or more items that are considered necessary for a decent standard of living. This suggests that a significant portion of the population experiences an inadequate standard of living.

Across the country, the most common items that people are unable to afford are the ability to:

- Pay for an unexpected expense of \$500 from their own resources.
- Repair or replace broken or damaged furniture.
- Repair or replace broken or damaged electronic goods (ie. refrigerator, washing machine, laptop).
- Spend a small amount of money on themselves each week.



# ALBERTA: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 4 GRADE: LEGISLATIVE PROGRESS

INDICATOR TITLE

GRADE

Legislative Progress



### SECTION 4: CONTEXT

A rising cost of living combined with a severe mental health crisis has left many people in Alberta struggling with food insecurity and high poverty rates. This has been made worse by government cuts to social services since 2019. With 2023 being an election year in Alberta, residents saw an increase in supports that will need to be matched in future years.

Notable developments include:

- Funding three new recovery communities providing holistic, culturally safe support for people with addictions – with signed memorandums of understandings with [Tsuut’ina First Nation](#), [Enoch Cree Nation](#) and [Siksika Nation](#).
- Developing new affordable housing; [\\$120 million commitment](#) to develop [1010 affordable units](#).
- Investing \$18.9 million to [help newcomers](#) access support for settlement, training, and language learning.
- [Investing in high speed internet](#) for 10,000 rural and remote households.
- [Increasing the Alberta Child and Family Benefit by 6%](#) and indexing it to inflation.
- Sending [\\$100/month over six months in affordability payments](#) for low-income families with children, low-incomeseniors, and people receiving Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH), Income Support, Canada Pension Plan Disability (CPPD) benefit, and the Alberta Seniors Benefit.
- Investing to improve safety and education outcomes for Indigenous communities including \$3 million/year over two years to develop [self-administered policing](#), [\\$10 million to support education opportunities](#), and [\\$15 million](#) to improve Indigenous women’s safety.

The Alberta government has invested significantly in mental health and addictions programs this year.

While several actions were taken to tackle the pressing issues of housing, cost of living, and social assistance, many of them were only temporary or short-term measures. It has been [a decade](#) since Alberta introduced a poverty reduction strategy. Without a comprehensive plan and long-term government commitment, poverty will likely remain a persistent challenge for Albertan’s.

For the above reasons, Alberta received a C for this section. While the government has taken a few significant steps to address poverty, in particular a moderate commitment to increase affordable housing, they have largely failed to pass legislation that substantially addresses key drivers of poverty – in particular social assistance reform. If the government continues at this rate, it will likely result in stagnating or worsening conditions for residents.

Food Banks  
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Banques alimentaires  
Canada

D

2023  
POVERTY REPORT CARD ANALYSIS

**SASKATCHEWAN**



# SASKATCHEWAN: AT A GLANCE



## SECTION 1 GRADE: EXPERIENCE OF POVERTY

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
People Feeling Worse off Compared to Last Year	49.3%	F
People Paying More than 30% of Income on Housing	36.0%	D-
People Having Trouble Accessing Healthcare	21.2%	F
Government Support Recipients Who Say Rates are Insufficient to Keep up with Cost of Living	58.8%	F
Percent of Income Spent on Fixed Costs beyond Housing	57.7%	D+



## SECTION 2 GRADE: POVERTY MEASURES

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
Poverty Rate (MBM)	9.1%	F
Social Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line (Singles)	45%	D
Disability Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line	62%	D+
Unemployment Rate	4.7%	C-
Food Insecurity Rate	20.3%	D



## SECTION 3 GRADE: MATERIAL DEPRIVATION

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
Severely Inadequate Standard of Living	11.9%	D+
Inadequate Standard of Living	25.4%	C-



## SECTION 4 GRADE: LEGISLATIVE PROGRESS

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
Legislative Progress	N/A	D



# SASKATCHEWAN

CONTEXT

CONTRIBUTING  
FACTORS

POLITICAL AND  
POLICY LANDSCAPE

LOOKING  
AHEAD

POLICY  
RECOMMENDATIONS

REPORT  
CARD



## CONTEXT

Saskatchewan's poverty landscape is unique compared to that of most other provinces. Two of the main factors that set it apart are the significant Indigenous population, which accounts for 16% of the total population, and the fact that 42% of the general population resides in either Saskatoon or Regina. While economic challenges such as housing affordability and rent inflation are prevalent across the prairies, Indigenous communities in Saskatchewan are disproportionately affected by increasing housing costs.

Any efforts to reduce poverty in Saskatchewan must therefore account for and coincide with meaningful Indigenous engagement and reconciliation. While this is unquestionably the case throughout the country, the success of any provincial poverty reduction strategy in Saskatchewan hinges on the involvement and support of Indigenous communities.

## CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

The poverty challenges faced by residents in Saskatchewan are shaped by both geography and access (both physical and theoretical).

**Physical Access to Services** – A significant portion of Saskatchewan's population resides outside of urban areas and lacks access to basic services: 72% of individuals indicate that infrastructure in remote communities is an important policy issue and 75% say that residents in isolated rural areas are not getting enough attention.

One of the most significant issues for residents in isolated areas is access to broadband services. These services are particularly important for communities where economic opportunities are more readily available online than locally. While Saskatchewan has made significant strides in increasing access to broadband services, coverage remains 10 percentage points lower than in neighbouring Alberta. This limits economic opportunity for all residents, particularly those living in rural and remote areas.

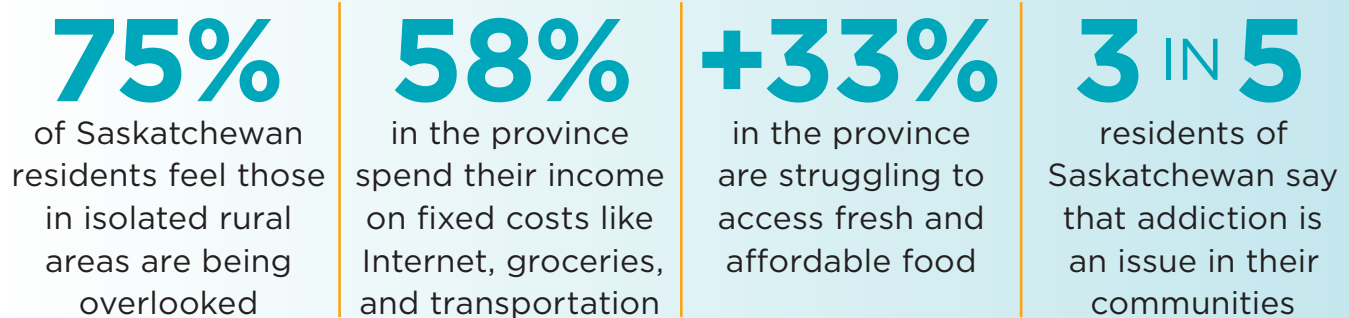
Addressing poverty in these regions requires a comprehensive approach that takes into account the unique challenges and needs of rural communities.

# SASKATCHEWAN

**Navigating the Social Safety Net** – The provincial government has not taken sufficient action to address underlying issues such as access to benefits, the growing cost of living, and housing affordability. **Nearly half of the survey respondents from Saskatchewan stated that they do not know what benefits they are eligible for and find the tax system difficult to navigate.** This difficulty may explain why **only 3% of the population in Saskatchewan is receiving a housing benefit**, compared to 11% nationally.

**Stretched Too Thin** – The low number of people receiving housing benefit is particularly concerning given that 36% of the population spends more than 30% of their income on housing. Paired with the fact that **residents in the province with low incomes are spending as much as 58% of their income on fixed costs like Internet, groceries, and transportation**, there is a real concern that people do not have enough money left over at the end of the month to feel financially secure.

The result of this financial stretch is that **over one-third of the population is struggling to access fresh and affordable food**, which is well beyond the national average.



**Mental Health and Addictions** – The number of people who say that they are financially worse off than they were last year is much higher in Saskatchewan than in the rest of the country (49% compared to 43%). In addition, **3 in 5 people report that addiction is an issue in their communities.** These figures highlight the link between finances and mental health and addictions.

## POLITICAL AND POLICY LANDSCAPE

While Saskatchewan took valuable steps to combat poverty reduction with the introduction of the provincial poverty reduction strategy and its goal of reducing the number of people experiencing poverty by 50% by 2025, the current strategy has not been updated or improved since 2016. Although Canada as a whole has come close to achieving a 50% reduction in poverty (thanks in part to significant pandemic supports), Saskatchewan has not. From 2015 to 2021, poverty rates declined by only 25% in the province.

Under Premier Scott Moe and the Saskatchewan Party, two key pieces of legislation concerning poverty reduction in the province have been passed.

# SASKATCHEWAN

First, in 2019, the government announced plans for the [Saskatchewan Income Support](#) (SIS) program. In 2021, everyone who received any form of provincial social support was moved into the SIS program. All other programs were phased out. The program has been repeatedly criticized by advocates who argue it does not provide sufficient support.

Second, in 2020, the [Saskatchewan Housing Benefit](#) was introduced to support households who spend more than 50% of their annual income on housing costs and have a pre-tax household income of below \$43,100 (single people and couples). Depending on the household size, the monthly benefit ranges from \$150 to \$250.

In December 2020, this benefit was expanded to include people living in private rental accommodation and in community housing. Despite its introduction, as previously highlighted, Saskatchewan still has the lowest housing support reach in the country, lagging behind the national average by seven percentage points.

The poor condition of existing affordable housing has also stymied efforts to assist families and individuals living on low incomes. For example, a 2022 [review of affordable housing programs](#) from the Community-University Institute for Social Research reveals that in Saskatoon, only about 40% of affordable housing units are considered as being in fair condition. This finding led to 18.4% of the Saskatoon Housing Authority's units remaining vacant and 19% unoccupied, far exceeding the national averages of 1.5% vacant and 3% unoccupied.

It should be noted that the province is set to record billion dollar surpluses in 2022–23 and 2023–24, thanks to a return of high commodity prices and an improved fiscal outlook post-COVID-19. Some of this wealth has been shared in the form of one-time affordability payments, but those payments represent short-term and inadequate responses to the systemic barriers to economic participation that residents face.

## LOOKING AHEAD

Local experts believe that to address poverty effectively, the government must:

- better identify and help those who are falling through the cracks of the social safety net,
- increase support for non-status Indigenous peoples, and
- address mental health and addictions across the province.

Moreover, local experts are urging a focus on prioritizing key groups, including Indigenous peoples, newcomers, youth, and single working-age Canadians.

Addressing poverty in Saskatchewan requires a holistic approach that brings together a diverse range of voices and experiences. Many critics believe that the current provincial government has cut back on essential programs, leaving many communities that are vulnerable to poverty without adequate support.

Given rising inflation and housing costs, urgent action is needed to lift more people above the poverty line. The government must prioritize poverty reduction and invest in effective and equitable policies to tackle the current crisis.

# SASKATCHEWAN

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

### Accountability

#### 1. Update and modernize the 2016 Poverty Reduction Strategy

While Canada has arguably already achieved Saskatchewan's own poverty reduction goals, the province has not. Given the significant change in economic conditions since the release of the provincial government's strategy in 2016, including the current commodity boom in the energy, natural resources, and agri-food industries, it is important for the province to refocus its efforts with a better sense of what is needed to close the remaining gaps.

### Affordable Housing

#### 2. Close the repair backlog for affordable housing so residents can actually make use of all affordable housing units

The 2022–2023 housing action plan has a current target of only 290 units for social housing unit repairs in 2022–23, estimated at \$17 million. This is woefully inadequate. These efforts need to be stepped up and broadened, with the goal of repairing at least 500 units a year until the current repair backlog is fully exhausted and then redeploying this capacity to build new units. This will not only improve the living conditions of people who need access to affordable housing but also provide an important economic boost via construction jobs and skilled trades opportunities.

### Income Support

#### 3. Ensure that all residents benefit from Saskatchewan's wealth

As part of the updates to the Poverty Reduction Strategy recommended above, the province should use its renewed fiscal strength to invest in people. This includes:

- improving the adequacy of basic income supports,
- introducing increased financial incentives to work, and
- helping families living on low incomes with the cost of raising a child and renting.

Using a mix of tools, the province should use the review to pursue a target that no family with a child falls below 85% of the poverty line and single, employable adults achieve a minimum of 70%. This would be generally consistent with, if not slightly better than, levels reached in the early 2000s, during the last major commodities boom and before subsequent recessions and inflation eroded purchasing power.

#### 4. Index Saskatchewan's support programs

Welfare incomes for households and individuals alike remain below a livable floor in Saskatchewan. Even some parents with dependent children, who could receive some of the most generous support under social assistance, still fall below the deep poverty threshold. While Saskatchewan took some steps in its most recent provincial budget to raise social assistance rates, they remain arbitrary. The province has not extended its recent re-indexation of income tax brackets and credits to social assistance, which it must do. In concert with our other recommendation for improving the adequacy of benefits for all residents, indexation will ensure that benefits remain meaningful regardless of inflation.

# SASKATCHEWAN

## Infrastructure that Works for People

### 5. Close Saskatchewan's broadband gap with Alberta

The province should leverage its status as an owner of SaskTel to direct the corporation to expand its current RuralFibre Initiative, which is already projected to extend the telecom's fibre network to about 80% of the province. This plan should focus on raising SaskTel's coverage target to 90% by 2025 and 95% by 2028.

## Decent Work that Pays

### 6. Raise the minimum wage to \$16.50/hour by 2024 and index it to inflation going forward

Saskatchewan has the lowest minimum wage of all the provinces and territories. It is currently set at \$13/hour, which is \$2/hour behind Alberta's current rate and \$1.15/hour behind Manitoba's. There are plans to increase it in Saskatchewan to \$14 in October 2023 and \$15 in October 2024, but these increases will keep Saskatchewan's minimum wage the lowest in the prairies. While efforts to index personal income tax (PIT) to inflation have been proposed, similar measures to ensure the minimum wage grows with inflation remain muted. An additional annual increase of 75 cents per hour to the planned increases and a further indexation to inflation going forward will not only assist households with low incomes but also ensure Saskatchewan's labour market remains competitive with its neighbours.



# SASKATCHEWAN: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 1 GRADE: EXPERIENCE OF POVERTY

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE	METHODOLOGY
People Feeling Worse off Compared to Last Year	49.3%	F	This grade is based on the percentage of respondents who indicated they are financially worse-off compared to one year prior. The grade was given a weight of 25/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
People Paying More than 30% of Income on Housing	36.0%	D-	This grade is based on the percentage of respondents who indicated they are spending 30% or more of their income on housing. The grade was given a weight of 20/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
People Having Trouble Accessing Healthcare	21.2%	F	This grade is based on the percentage of respondents who indicated they 'somewhat disagree' or 'strongly disagree' with the statement 'I can access and receive healthcare anytime I need to' AND stated the reason was due to one or more of the following reasons: 'I can't take time off work'; 'I don't have healthcare coverage'; 'I don't have money for medication'. The grade was given a weight of 10/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Government Support Recipients Who Say Rates are Insufficient to Keep up with Cost of Living	58.8%	F	This grade is based on the percentage of individuals who indicated that they 'personally receive some form of social security benefit or support' AND indicated that 'social assistance rates aren't high enough to help me keep up with the cost of living'. The grade was given a weight of 25/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Percent of Income Spent on Fixed Costs beyond Housing	57.7%	D+	This grade is based on the combination of results from several questions asking the average amount individuals spend on fixed costs like internet, transport, groceries, and utilities. The average amounts spent were converted into a portion of income for those earning \$75,000 a year or less (given in a range from lowest to highest). This number is the higher end of the range provided. The grade was given a weight of 20/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).

### SECTION 1: CONTEXT

Saskatchewan received an overall grade of D- in this section. A key contributor to this grade was a failing grade in the People Feeling Worse off Compared to Last Year indicator, with over 49% of respondents reporting they were struggling more financially compared to one year prior. Saskatchewan nearly ties with Alberta as the second worst in the country for this indicator, behind Nova Scotia.

Additionally, more than half of people (59%) receiving government support indicated that rates are not high enough to keep up with the cost of living. This rate is the worst in the country. A significant portion of the population struggles with the Accessibility of Health Care, which also drags down the province's overall grade.

Saskatchewan consistently performed poorly in each indicator in this section, suggesting that residents are acutely experiencing poverty. Its overall grade of D- in this section is the worst out of all the provinces (tied with Nova Scotia).





# SASKATCHEWAN: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 2 GRADE: **POVERTY MEASURES**

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE	METHODOLOGY
Poverty Rate (MBM)	9.1%	F	The poverty rate (MBM) is based on data from the Statistics Canada 2021 Canadian Income Survey <a href="#">table</a> showing poverty and low income statistics by selected demographic characteristics. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 25/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Social Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line (Singles)	45%	D	This grade is based on the maximum annual social assistance rate (provincial only) for a single unattached individual considered employable compared to the official poverty line of the provincial capital (the Market Basket Measure). The data is from <a href="#">Welfare in Canada 2022</a> , available on Maytree's website. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 15/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Disability Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line	62%	D+	This grade is based on the maximum annual social assistance rate (provincial only) for a single unattached individual with a disability compared to the official poverty line of the provincial capital (the Market Basket Measure). The data is from <a href="#">Welfare in Canada 2022</a> , available on Maytree's website. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 15/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Unemployment Rate	4.7%	C-	This grade is based on Statistics Canada's <a href="#">Labour force characteristics by province</a> , monthly adjusted. This data is from March 2023. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 15/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Food Insecurity Rate	20.3%	D	This grade is based on the combination of Marginal, Moderate, and Severe food insecurity rates for all persons in 2022 from the Statistics Canada's <a href="#">Canadian Income Survey (CIS)</a> (2021). The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 30/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).

## SECTION 2: **CONTEXT**

Saskatchewan received an overall grade of D- in this section. Contributing to this grade was an F grade in the Poverty Rate category, as over 9% of Saskatchewan residents are living below the poverty line. This means that Saskatchewan has the highest poverty rate of all the provinces.

When compared to the neighbouring prairie provinces, Alberta and Manitoba, Saskatchewan is performing better on the two social assistance rate indicators. However, while the province is performing well on a regional level, the overall rates are still far below the poverty line. For single adults, social assistance rates result in incomes at below half of the poverty line, which contributed to low grades in this section.

Even though Saskatchewan has lower unemployment rates than the national average, people are still struggling. This is a sign of low wages and high costs of living, both of which the province must address to keep people from falling further into poverty and food insecurity.





# SASKATCHEWAN: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 3 GRADE: MATERIAL DEPRIVATION

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE	METHODOLOGY
Severely Inadequate Standard of Living	11.9%		This grade is based on the % of individuals who were unable to afford 5 or more items from a list of items considered necessary for an adequate standard of living. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 60/100. Grades were determined using a grading scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Inadequate Standard of Living	25.4%		This grade is based on the % of individuals who were unable to afford 2 or more items from a list of items considered necessary for an adequate standard of living. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 40/100. Grades were determined using a grading scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).

### SECTION 3: CONTEXT

**\*A material deprivation index (MDI) is a measure that assesses the extent to which individuals lack access to a list of basic needs. Someone who can afford all items on this list would be living an adequate standard of living. This index allows us to gauge a person's level of economic well-being without looking at income.**

Compared to other provinces, Saskatchewan has a slightly above-average standard of living according to the Material Deprivation Index. It a C- for this section.

Compared to the other prairie provinces, Saskatchewan is performing moderately well. Alberta and Manitoba received a D- and a C respectively.

Still, over one-quarter of the residents in the province are missing two or more items that are considered necessary for a decent standard of living.

Across the country, the most common items that people are unable to afford are the ability to:

- Pay for an unexpected expense of \$500 from their own resources.
- Repair or replace broken or damaged furniture.
- Repair or replace broken or damaged electronic goods (ie. refrigerator, washing machine, laptop).
- Spend a small amount of money on themselves each week.



# SASKATCHEWAN: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 4 GRADE: LEGISLATIVE PROGRESS

INDICATOR TITLE

GRADE

Legislative Progress



### SECTION 4: CONTEXT

Despite a strong economy and the second lowest unemployment rate in the country, Saskatchewan residents experience some of the highest poverty rates nationally. The province has used some of the surplus from its strong economic recovery to increase social assistance and prioritize investments in mental health and addiction support.

Notable developments include:

- [Increasing Social Assistance Benefits in several programs:](#)
  - The Adult Basic Benefit, Shelter Benefit, and Alternate Heating Benefit available through [Saskatchewan Income Support](#) (SIS) increasing by \$30 per month.
  - [Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability](#) (SAID) payments increasing by \$30 per month.
  - [Personal Care Home Benefit](#) (PCHB) increasing by up to \$400 per month and Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability (SAID) clients who live in personal care homes receiving up to \$684 more per month.
  - [The Seniors Income Plan](#), increasing by \$30 per month.
- [Improving access](#) to SAID by launching a new online portal.
- Investing in services for people experiencing addiction and mental health challenges:
  - [Expanding free rapid counselling](#) for children, youth, and caregivers.
  - [Adding 50 new addiction treatment spaces](#) to support those experiencing a mental health crisis.
- Achieving [\\$10/day daycare](#), with additional investments in early learning and childcare infrastructure and training.

The province has put minimal focus on two acute challenge areas: increasing the supply and quality of affordable housing and reducing regional inequalities, including those between rural and urban communities, and between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.

Saskatchewan has announced a handful of new affordable housing projects; however, these efforts are not significant enough to offset the massive challenges of affordable housing. Similarly, efforts to increase social assistance are applauded but are not enough to make a significant impact.

Although the province has made a record-level announcement of \$249.1 million in targeted funding for First Nation people and Métis, the increase is mainly attributed to higher gaming payments. The Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN) has highlighted that the province has [reduced overall funding to First Nations by 8.76%](#) in the latest budget.



# SASKATCHEWAN: REPORT CARD

To meaningfully address poverty in the province, strong and coordinated efforts need to be made to build more affordable housing and improve rural access to services, and to work with Indigenous communities to create tailored and culturally safe services.

For the above reasons, Saskatchewan received a D for this section. The government has taken some minor steps to address poverty through increasing and improving access to assistance. However, it has largely failed to pass legislation that substantially addresses key drivers of poverty, in particular housing. If the trend continues, residents' circumstances will likely worsen.

Food Banks  
Canada



Banques alimentaires  
Canada



2023  
**POVERTY REPORT CARD ANALYSIS**

**MANITOBA**



# MANITOBA: AT A GLANCE



## SECTION 1 GRADE: EXPERIENCE OF POVERTY

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
People Feeling Worse off Compared to Last Year	41.5%	C-
People Paying More than 30% of Income on Housing	28.7%	B+
People Having Trouble Accessing Healthcare	21.2%	F
Government Support Recipients Who Say Rates are Insufficient to Keep up with Cost of Living	43.2%	D+
Percent of Income Spent on Fixed Costs beyond Housing	59.1%	D



## SECTION 2 GRADE: POVERTY MEASURES

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
Poverty Rate (MBM)	8.8%	F
Social Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line (Singles)	37%	F
Disability Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line	52%	F
Unemployment Rate	4.7%	C-
Food Insecurity Rate	19.6%	D+



## SECTION 3 GRADE: MATERIAL DEPRIVATION

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
Severely Inadequate Standard of Living	10.7%	C-
Inadequate Standard of Living	23.2%	C+



## SECTION 4 GRADE: LEGISLATIVE PROGRESS

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
Legislative Progress	N/A	C

# MANITOBA

CONTEXT

CONTRIBUTING  
FACTORS

POLITICAL AND  
POLICY LANDSCAPE

LOOKING  
AHEAD

POLICY  
RECOMMENDATIONS

REPORT  
CARD



## CONTEXT

Despite the provincial government taking historically strong steps to address the housing crisis, many people in Manitoba continue to struggle with poverty. Over the past few years, the government has failed to take significant action to eliminate poverty.

## CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

**Geography at Play** – Manitoba has unique characteristics that require special attention when addressing poverty reduction. A majority (55%) of the province’s population lives in its main city of Winnipeg. Those who live outside the city centre face challenges in accessing essential support systems and services. In addition, **half the population, the highest proportion in the country, say they have difficulty navigating the tax system.** This latter fact may be compounding the challenges that people outside of Winnipeg experience in accessing services and support.

In addition, Manitoba faces significant food insecurity challenges: 1 in 5 households experienced food insecurity in 2021. Northern or remote parts of the province will experience further challenges because of rising inflation and increased costs of gas and transportation.

**Success Through Rent Assist** – While the cost of living is still causing many issues for families in Manitoba, and across the country, the widespread issue of affordable housing is less severe in Manitoba. **Thanks largely to the province’s comprehensive Rent Assist program, Manitoba has the lowest percentage in the country of people paying 30% or more of their income on rent: 29%.** This means families struggling with the cost of living can reallocate money toward important things like food and bills.

However, while the Rent Assist program is a promising model for how to deliver flexible support to people in a tight housing market, a lack of subsequent investment since it was introduced in 2015 has resulted in more Manitobans struggling through the recent affordability crisis. The average cost of rent in Manitoba has increased 20%, while eligibility for Rent Assist has risen only 4%.

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**Mental Health Issues Persist** – Having to worry less about rent is one way to help residents cope with mental health issues. However, our survey responses indicate that Manitoba’s mental health and addictions issue is both growing and in need of serious attention. The percentage of people who say their **mental health is impacting their ability to find work, work effectively, and maintain their finances is the worst in Canada: 37%**. The link between mental health and finances is well documented, and **42% of Manitobans feel they are worse off financially than they were a year ago**. Additionally, 2 in 3 respondents—the highest number in the country—agreed that addiction is an issue in their community that needs to be addressed.

**Indigenous Lens Needed** – Indigenous peoples make up 17% of Manitoba’s population. As poverty disproportionately affects Indigenous communities, it is important for the province to recognize the importance of supporting these communities if they are to achieve their provincial poverty reduction targets.

**50%**  
of Manitoba’s  
population have  
difficulty navigating  
the tax system

**1 IN 5**  
households  
in Manitoba  
experienced food  
insecurity in 2021

**42%**  
of Manitobans  
feel they are worse  
off financially  
than they were  
a year ago.

**2 IN 3**  
residents of  
Manitoba agree  
that addiction is  
an issue in their  
community

## POLITICAL AND POLICY LANDSCAPE

Under the Progressive Conservative Party (PCP), Manitoba has introduced a handful of measures and reports to aid in reducing poverty.

In 2018, the government launched its renewed [Poverty Reduction Strategy](#). As Manitoba has consistently had the worst child poverty rates nationwide, the updated poverty reduction strategy aims to reduce the child poverty rate by 25% by 2025. The strategy relies heavily on federal transfers such as the Canada Child Benefit (CCB) and investments in early learning and childcare to achieve this objective.

In December 2021, Campaign 2000 released a [report](#) outlining successive governments’ failure to address the growing problem of child poverty. The report outlined that Manitoba’s 2019 child poverty rate was 28.4%, the second highest of any province or territory and significantly above the national average of 17.7%. Data from the same year shows that three of the top five ridings, in terms of the child poverty rate nationwide, were in Manitoba – two in the north and one in Winnipeg. Notably, the child poverty rate in northern Manitoba (64%) was four times the rate of certain ridings in the Winnipeg area.

The Rent Assist program was increased in 2021, which meant an additional \$30 million toward Rent Assist benefits, resulting in an increase in benefits of up to 11% for recipients.



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Most recently, in February 2023, the government launched its [Homelessness Strategy](#) to work toward the reduction of homelessness and homelessness prevention. However, the prevention aspect needs to be addressed more thoroughly if Manitoba is to see a serious decline in homelessness.

## LOOKING AHEAD

Manitoba's 2023 budget focuses on tax relief and makes few commitments to address poverty across the province. In 2022, Manitoba had the highest child poverty rates in Canada, and this year's budget does little to increase affordability and support families who are struggling.

The budget mentions some commitments to help the most vulnerable members of society, such as funding for a provincial homelessness strategy and investments to actualize \$10-per-day childcare this year. There were continued investments into the three-year action plan as part of the National Housing Strategy but no new increases to social assistance rates other than those announced in 2022.

Moving forward, Manitoba will need to prioritize actions that target marginalized demographics, such as Indigenous peoples. Additional action on mental health, improving access to social supports, and expanding Rent Assist will also be crucial to fighting poverty.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

### Accountability

#### 1. Present a poverty reduction strategy for all Manitobans, with a particular focus on single people and Indigenous peoples

As of 2021, child poverty has declined in Manitoba by more than 50%. It is imperative that the next provincial government update the Poverty Reduction Strategy early in its mandate, and that it include measures to reduce poverty by comparable amounts for other groups who remain disproportionately affected by poverty, including single people and Indigenous peoples. The strategy must include a plan to address the calls to action brought forth by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls report. Additionally, the legislature should require the government to update the strategy every three years so that it remains relevant.

#### 2. Develop a youth employment and training strategy, with the goal of reducing the proportion of young people not in employment, education, or training (NEET) by 25% by 2025

The proportion of young people in Manitoba who are not working, looking for work, or in education/training (NEET) is the fourth highest in Canada, and second highest specifically among non-school age adults (age 20+) who have given up entirely on looking for work or pursuing learning. These young people are likely to already be in poverty and are at a high risk of staying there out of a sense of hopelessness for future job prospects.

The provincial government must focus on ending this cycle of poverty before it begins. Within 100 days of this fall's provincial election, the incoming government should convene an expert panel to prepare a youth employment

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strategy, to be presented within the following six months and legislated alongside goals as part of an updated provincial poverty reduction strategy. The short-term objective of this youth employment and training strategy should be to make the necessary investments to reduce the province's NEET rate by 25%.

## Affordable Housing

### 3. Strengthen rental assistance

To address the lack of recent investment in the Rent Assist program as rent costs continue to climb, shelter supports should be enhanced and all eligibility thresholds increased by 20% of their current levels. The government should also consider an increase in the value of the benefit to a floor of 80% of median rent.

### 4. Establish a \$100 million annual Manitoba Housing Accelerator Fund

While Budget 2023 made important investments in combatting homelessness and supporting transitional housing, this only addresses the symptoms of a basic lack of affordable housing. To help municipal and non-profit housing providers kick-start major new construction, the province should establish a \$100 million annual Housing Accelerator Fund, which would assist with land acquisition costs, development charge offsets, and construction grants for affordable, purpose-built rental housing. Going forward, the fund should be provided a target allocation of 0.5% of the provincial budget.

## Childcare

### 5. Accelerate investments to create new affordable childcare spaces

While Manitoba is investing \$94 million this year to create 2,600 additional childcare spaces, this is barely 11% of the 23,000 new spaces the province has committed to achieving by 2025–2026 as part of the Canada-Manitoba ELCC (early learning and childcare) agreement.

Without a plan to accelerate near-term investments, it is questionable whether the target number of new spaces can be created within the proposed time frame, especially considering that the number of certified early childhood educators has declined in the province over the last decade. Broad and affordable access to early learning and childcare is imperative for families to have meaningful and equitable access to decent work.

## Income Support

### 6. Expand the earnings exemption capacity and make the Rewarding Work Allowance more rewarding

The Employment and Income Assistance (EIA) general assistance benefit allows for an exemption on the first \$200 a recipient earns plus 30% of anything past this amount. This is an effective 70% claw-back on benefits for every dollar earned, and a clear disincentive for recipients to pursue decent work. The earnings exemption should be increased, at minimum, to the first \$500 earned and the claw back rate should be decreased minimally to 50%, meaning every recipient would retain a half or more of every dollar earned.

Further, to help individuals and households living on low incomes gain financial independence, the province should also consider increasing the monthly benefit from the Rewarding Work Allowance by 50%, from \$100 to \$150 for each adult who works full-time and from \$50 to \$75 for each adult who works part-time.



# MANITOBA: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 1 GRADE: EXPERIENCE OF POVERTY

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE	METHODOLOGY
People Feeling Worse off Compared to Last Year	41.5%	C-	This grade is based on the percentage of respondents who indicated they are financially worse-off compared to one year prior. The grade was given a weight of 25/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
People Paying More than 30% of Income on Housing	28.7%	B+	This grade is based on the percentage of respondents who indicated they are spending 30% or more of their income on housing. The grade was given a weight of 20/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
People Having Trouble Accessing Healthcare	21.2%	F	This grade is based on the percentage of respondents who indicated they 'somewhat disagree' or 'strongly disagree' with the statement 'I can access and receive healthcare anytime I need to' AND stated the reason was due to one or more of the following reasons: 'I can't take time off work'; 'I don't have healthcare coverage'; 'I don't have money for medication'. The grade was given a weight of 10/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Government Support Recipients Who Say Rates are Insufficient to Keep up with Cost of Living	43.2%	D+	This grade is based on the percentage of individuals who indicated that they 'personally receive some form of social security benefit or support' AND indicated that 'social assistance rates aren't high enough to help me keep up with the cost of living'. The grade was given a weight of 25/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Percent of Income Spent on Fixed Costs beyond Housing	59.1%	D	This grade is based on the combination of results from several questions asking the average amount individuals spend on fixed costs like internet, transport, groceries, and utilities. The average amounts spent were converted into a portion of income for those earning \$75,000 a year or less (given in a range from lowest to highest). This number is the higher end of the range provided. The grade was given a weight of 20/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).

### SECTION 1: CONTEXT

Manitoba received an overall grade of C- in this section, placing it among the best performing provinces in the country. Key contributors to this grade were a B+ in the *People Spending More than 30% of Income on Housing* indicator. This comes as no surprise as Manitoba has the nation's most comprehensive rental support program.

This housing grade likely contributed to Manitoba receiving the second-highest grade in this section, behind only Quebec, which received a C.

Unfortunately, the rising cost of living may be undercutting the efforts made on the housing side. For the Fixed Cost Beyond Housing indicator the province scored a D. Residents earning \$75,000 a year or less are spending up to 60% of their income on necessities like utilities and groceries, meaning the support from the housing program is still barely keeping people's heads above water.

Poor Accessibility of Health Care is another challenge in Manitoba. The province received an F for this indicator, which is among the worst of the provinces. Large parts of Manitoba are rural and remote, which creates a barrier to health care and disparities of access between rural and urban residents.



# MANITOBA: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 2 GRADE: **POVERTY MEASURES**

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE	METHODOLOGY
Poverty Rate (MBM)	8.8%	F	The poverty rate (MBM) is based on data from the Statistics Canada 2021 Canadian Income Survey <a href="#">table</a> showing poverty and low income statistics by selected demographic characteristics. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 25/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Social Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line (Singles)	37%	F	This grade is based on the maximum annual social assistance rate (provincial only) for a single unattached individual considered employable compared to the official poverty line of the provincial capital (the Market Basket Measure). The data is from <a href="#">Welfare in Canada 2022</a> , available on Maytree's website. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 15/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Disability Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line	52%	F	This grade is based on the maximum annual social assistance rate (provincial only) for a single unattached individual with a disability compared to the official poverty line of the provincial capital (the Market Basket Measure). The data is from <a href="#">Welfare in Canada 2022</a> , available on Maytree's website. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 15/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Unemployment Rate	4.7%	C-	This grade is based on Statistics Canada's <a href="#">Labour force characteristics by province</a> , monthly adjusted. This data is from March 2023. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 15/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Food Insecurity Rate	19.6%	D+	This grade is based on the combination of Marginal, Moderate, and Severe food insecurity rates for all persons in 2022 from the Statistics Canada's <a href="#">Canadian Income Survey (CIS)</a> (2021). The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 30/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).

## SECTION 2: **CONTEXT**

Manitoba received an overall grade of D- in this section. Contributing to this grade was an F in the Poverty Rate indicator, with nearly 9% of provincial residents living below the poverty line. This is among the highest in the country.

The inadequacy of social assistance in the province also contributed to the low grade. For single adults, social assistance is entirely inadequate, providing incomes far below the poverty line; and people who rely on disability assistance receive incomes equivalent to just over half the poverty line, resulting in F grades for both indicators.

Manitoba is generally on par or between the other two prairie provinces, except for food insecurity levels, which are moderately better.

Given the decent unemployment rate, increases to the social assistance levels in Manitoba would increase grades in this section.



# MANITOBA: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 3 GRADE: MATERIAL DEPRIVATION

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE	METHODOLOGY
Severely Inadequate Standard of Living	10.7%	C-	This grade is based on the % of individuals who were unable to afford 5 or more items from a list of items considered necessary for an adequate standard of living. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 60/100. Grades were determined using a grading scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Inadequate Standard of Living	23.2%	C+	This grade is based on the % of individuals who were unable to afford 2 or more items from a list of items considered necessary for an adequate standard of living. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 40/100. Grades were determined using a grading scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).

### SECTION 3: CONTEXT

**\*A material deprivation index (MDI) is a measure that assesses the extent to which individuals lack access to a list of basic needs. Someone who can afford all items on this list would be living an adequate standard of living. This index allows us to gauge a person’s level of economic well-being without looking at income.**

Compared to other provinces, Manitoba has an above-average standard of living according to the Material Deprivation Index. The grade received for this section is a C. This is the second-highest Material Deprivation grade of all the provinces.

Manitoba is performing better than the other prairie provinces. Alberta and Saskatchewan received a D- and a C-, respectively.

Still, nearly one-quarter of the residents in the province are missing two or more items that are considered necessary for a decent standard of living.

Across the country, the most common items that people are unable to afford are the ability to:

- Pay for an unexpected expense of \$500 from their own resources.
- Repair or replace broken or damaged furniture.
- Repair or replace broken or damaged electronic goods (ie. refrigerator, washing machine, laptop).
- Spend a small amount of money on themselves each week.



# MANITOBA: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 4 GRADE: LEGISLATIVE PROGRESS

INDICATOR TITLE

GRADE

Legislative Progress



### SECTION 4: CONTEXT

Manitoba leads the country in affordable housing but continues to struggle deeply with high rates of mental health issues and addiction, child poverty, and a growing disparity between urban and rural communities.

This year, Manitoba has made some efforts to reduce poverty. With an election coming in the fall, government has increased the number of new supports and programs it announces. In future years, Manitoba will have to continue with these higher levels of commitments if it is to maintain or increase its grade.

Notable developments include:

- [Increasing the minimum wage](#) twice in the last year; from \$13.5/hour to \$15.30/hour.
- [Indexing rent assist and basic needs benefits for the Manitoba Supports for Persons with Disabilities](#) income assistance program.
- [Introducing](#) a new strategy for homelessness with pillars focusing on prevention and building capacity in rural and northern Manitoba. The strategy will introduce 700 new social housing units in this year.
- Announcing a [\\$154 million investment to improve health care](#) for communities across northern Manitoba, and to develop new mental health and addictions treatment options.
- Achieving [\\$10-a-day child care](#) and investing [\\$94 million to increase childcare places in rural and Indigenous communities](#).
- New [changes](#) to the Canada-Manitoba Housing Benefit (CMHB) will now provide enhanced support for Manitobans on low incomes who rent. For example, the maximum benefit was increased to \$350/month, up from \$250/month.

Manitoba also made positive changes to the tax system which will result in low-income families saving more of their income.

Overall, the measures introduced this year should make an impact on reducing child poverty and addressing regional health inequalities. However, people who rely on social assistance, particularly single people, continue to encounter affordability challenges. To build on the progress made to date and help those most in need, a comprehensive and updated poverty reduction strategy is needed.

For the above reasons, Manitoba received a C for this section. While the government has taken a few significant steps to address regional health inequalities, they have failed to pass legislation that substantially addresses key drivers of poverty – in particular housing and social assistance reform. If this trend continues, it will likely result in stagnating or worsening conditions for Manitobans.

Food Banks  
Canada



Banques alimentaires  
Canada



2023  
**POVERTY REPORT CARD ANALYSIS**

**ONTARIO**





# ONTARIO: AT A GLANCE



## SECTION 1 GRADE: EXPERIENCE OF POVERTY

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
People Feeling Worse off Compared to Last Year	43.1%	D+
People Paying More than 30% of Income on Housing	37.8%	F
People Having Trouble Accessing Healthcare	30.1%	F
Government Support Recipients Who Say Rates are Insufficient to Keep up with Cost of Living	44.4%	D
Percent of Income Spent on Fixed Costs beyond Housing	55.0%	C+



## SECTION 2 GRADE: POVERTY MEASURES

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
Poverty Rate (MBM)	7.7%	D
Social Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line (Singles)	34%	F
Disability Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line	54%	D-
Unemployment Rate	5.1%	D+
Food Insecurity Rate	19.2%	C+



## SECTION 3 GRADE: MATERIAL DEPRIVATION

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
Severely Inadequate Standard of Living	12.4%	D
Inadequate Standard of Living	32.0%	F



## SECTION 4 GRADE: LEGISLATIVE PROGRESS

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
Legislative Progress	N/A	F

# ONTARIO

CONTEXT

CONTRIBUTING  
FACTORS

POLITICAL AND  
POLICY LANDSCAPE

LOOKING  
AHEAD

POLICY  
RECOMMENDATIONS

REPORT  
CARD



## CONTEXT

As Canada's most populated province, Ontario represents a significant portion of Canadian poverty. Unfortunately, government actions over the last number of years have not only failed to address poverty but also exacerbated it in some cases.

Ontario has a large working-class population struggling with poverty. Moreover, the housing crisis and challenges faced by people living with a disability are major issues in terms of poverty.

## CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

**Housing and the Cost of Living** – The most often discussed drivers for poverty in Ontario are housing affordability and the high costs of living. Home [ownership costs](#) in Ontario are the nation's second highest. In addition, nearly 70% of food bank users are renters, which points to the cost of rent as a significant factor in the affordability context.

On average, one-bedroom rentals in Ontario are the highest in the country: almost \$2,200/month. Three-bedroom units are second highest: roughly \$3,000 a month, behind BC's \$3,400 price point. Altogether, 1 in 4 people living in the province have difficulties finding affordable housing and nearly **2 in 5 are spending more than 30% of their income on housing**.

In terms of the cost of living in Ontario, many people living on low incomes are spending well above half their income on fixed costs outside of housing. Far more people in Ontario are reporting that they cannot access necessary health care because of affordability issues. The issue of affordability seems to be worsening, as **43% of Ontarians say they are financially worse off than one year ago**.

# ONTARIO

**Solutions to Social Security** – Better employment opportunities and policies to promote decent work would help to ease the difficulties of people living in Ontario. Unfortunately, people who receive social assistance and are looking to re-enter the workforce are effectively punished because their benefits are clawed back aggressively for each dollar earned. In addition, Ontario has **some of the lowest social assistance rates in the country**: 34% of the poverty line for single working-age adults. In other words, while individuals are legislated to poverty under the province’s social assistance plan, the challenge of finding adequate work is made more difficult than it already is.

**2 IN 5**

Ontarians are spending more than 30% of their income on housing

**43%**

of Ontarians say they are financially worse off than one year ago

**37%**

of people in racialized communities in Ontario are affected by low wages

**41%**

of racialized Ontarians able to find housing are struggling to keep up with rising rents

**Sociodemographic Considerations\*** – Racialized people in Ontario face many challenges that the rest of the province does not. Data from our survey suggests there are two particular areas where this group experiences increased challenges: work and housing.

**Low wages are affecting 37% of those within racialized communities** from making ends meet, compared to 30% across the province. Making the issue worse is that 39% of racialized Ontarians also have difficulty accessing stable employment in their community, which is a full 10% higher than the provincial average. Beyond these challenges in the job market, 41% of racialized respondents also stated that their **mental health is affecting their ability to find work**, work effectively, or maintain finances.

With these challenges, it’s not surprising to discover that those within racialized communities are far more likely to struggle with housing related issues. Overall, 34% of respondents in this group agreed that it is **hard to find adequate housing**, which is almost 10% more than the provincial average. For those who find housing, **41% agree that it is hard for them to keep up with rising rents** (+7 percentage points from provincial average). As such, 30% of them are spending 30% to 50% of their income on housing, which is 7 percentage points higher than the provincial average.

\*Ontario is one of the three provinces with a large enough sample size to report on racialized communities in our survey.

## POLITICAL AND POLICY LANDSCAPE

**Approach to Poverty** – In 2018, the provincial government reversed many of the existing policy measures in place, including the basic income pilot; froze social and disability assistance rates; and eliminated universal programs like access to free prescription drugs.

Since 2018, the province’s approach to reducing poverty has turned away from social focuses of homelessness, mental health, and targeting vulnerable populations toward an employment focus.

Compared to poverty reduction strategies in other provinces and at the federal level, Ontario lacks a clear method of measuring overall success in reducing the number of Ontarians who find themselves with a low income. While the province’s current strategy includes metrics to increase employment and reduce social assistance caseload, these do not guarantee any success with respect to overall poverty reduction.

One major change to arise from the 2018 shift was the introduction of the Low-Income Individuals and Family Tax (LIFT) Credit. The income transfer system, including the role played by refundable tax measures such as LIFT and the CWB, is one of the most powerful tools we have for reducing poverty and food insecurity simultaneously. Since its introduction, LIFT has provided potentially thousands of dollars in additional support for workers to make the transition to work, even if it is low-wage or part-time.

**Housing** – In 2020, the Progressive Conservative (PC) government launched the [Building a Strong Foundation for Success: Reducing Poverty in Ontario](#) strategy, a five-year plan to reduce poverty. This strategy emphasized the importance the government places on achieving its target of transitioning 60,000 social assistance recipients to employment to by 2024. Critics [have noted this plan is flawed](#) in that it:

- sets too low a bar in measuring success by seeing poverty reduction in terms of the number of people who exit social assistance,
- fails to recognize the growing number of working poor, and
- misses the fact that many low-paying jobs still leave Ontarians in poverty.

Despite housing being the province’s greatest issue, the PC government has failed on multiple occasions to take substantial steps toward making affordable housing available. For example, it ignored the advice of the Housing Affordability Task Force by introducing first the More Homes for Everyone Act and then the More Homes Built Faster Act in 2022. The More Homes Built Faster Act has been largely criticized by affordable housing experts, who say that it could actually reduce the amount of affordable housing and increase developers’ profits.

## LOOKING AHEAD

Local experts believe that if the government is to address poverty effectively, it must also address:

- affordable housing,
- the presence of deep poverty in the province, and
- the lack of knowledge about where to find information about taxes and what benefits are available to residents.

Moreover, local experts maintain that policymakers must prioritize vulnerable groups such as young people and the working poor.

Ontario's 2023 budget failed to address poverty reduction and the soaring cost of living across the province. Despite Ontario's being one of the most expensive provinces to live in, the budget does little to help individuals and families struggling to make ends meet. Some minor commitments worth noting are investments in the Homelessness Prevention Program and Indigenous Supportive Housing Program. While an investment to support community-based mental health and addiction services is included in the budget, it is limited to service providers funded by the Ministry of Health.

In 2023, Ontario will need to continue helping workers earning low incomes through more robust programming. This approach matches the government's general direction so far and directly addresses concerns about the availability of decent work. Beyond this, the government must take steps to show that it is taking the housing affordability crisis seriously, and beyond that, the poverty crisis.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

### Accountability

#### 1. Establish a clear poverty reduction target

We recommend the province formally adopt a set of poverty reduction targets in line with Canada's poverty reduction strategy, which would entail a 50% reduction in poverty by 2030, compared to 2015 levels. Given how close the province came to achieving this goal during the pandemic, in the short term leaders should prioritize actions that improve income security, build affordable housing, and promote decent work to ensure that recent progress is not significantly reversed.

### Decent Work that Pays

#### 2. Double the Low-Income Individuals and Families Tax (LIFT) Credit for Ontarians earning less than \$50,000 and seek to harmonize the Canada Workers Benefit (CWB) with it

To bolster the incentives of LIFT, the Province should reinvest recent fiscal windfalls from the post-COVID-19 labour market recovery in making good work pay. Building on the existing platform of LIFT, we recommend the province double LIFT to \$1,700, targeting in particular workers earning less than \$50,000, which is broadly consistent with the Market Basket Measure (MBM) poverty line for a worker living in Toronto.

To help improve the impact of the program for users, the Ontario government should also work with the federal government to harmonize the program design with the CWB. Efforts to harmonize the programs would ensure that a low-wage worker employed for 20 hours a week or less, earning \$16/hour, would be able to benefit fully from nearly \$3,300 in combined and unreduced support.

### **3. Make it easier for people in the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) to work and earn**

While the province has made welcome changes to increase the amount that a recipient of ODSP can keep should they find work (recently increased to \$1,000 per month from \$200), any earnings above this level are still clawed back at a rate of 75%. At a minimum, the province should reduce this claw-back provision to 50%, which would align with the current earnings exemption rule in Ontario. This would improve the ability of and incentive for ODSP recipients to seek and find work should they be able.

### **4. Modernization of Ontario Works and ODSP**

In anticipation of the significant impact the forthcoming Canada Disability Benefit will have on Canada's social safety net, the government of Ontario should undertake a similar review to enhance both the adequacy and the simplicity of benefits so that they provide livable support that encourages people who are able to work.

## **Affordable Housing**

### **5. Establish a provincial housing accelerator fund with new tax and grant incentives to supercharge the construction of affordable, purpose-built rental housing**

Ontario needs both more homes and also more homes that are affordable. While the province has taken some very modest steps to accelerate housing construction, virtually none of this policy effort has been focused on meeting the housing affordability needs of lower-income and working-poor populations. Private market developers are struggling to keep up with rising demand in light of a significant tightening of financial conditions, as interest rates have surged over the past year. While developers have played a role in the worsening housing market, they will still be needed as Ontario works toward finding a solution.

We recommend the Province establish a provincial housing accelerator fund focused on a mix of tax and grant incentives for developers. This could include establishing a time-limited, enhanced capital cost allowance class for purpose-built rental units so that developers can recoup their capital investments faster. In exchange, Ontario would set strong conditions to increase the mix of affordable and below-market units, which would increase the number of affordable units and offer greater choice. The fund could also be paired with further grant investments to assist with land acquisition.

### **6. Establish an Ontario housing protection and acquisition fund**

If Ontarians are to have affordable housing, and if Ontario's non-profit and co-operative housing providers are to keep up with the demand for housing, there is a critical need for non-profit and co-operative housing providers to be able to acquire land and property for development cheaply and quickly, as this is often the most important cost in development. The province's More Homes Built Faster strategy has taken initial steps in this direction by proposing to exempt affordable housing projects from development charges. This initiative urgently needs to be matched with available provincial funding and land so that projects can proceed. We recommend that an acquisition and development stream of at least \$400 million be dedicated to affordable housing providers.





# ONTARIO: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 1 GRADE: EXPERIENCE OF POVERTY

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE	METHODOLOGY
People Feeling Worse off Compared to Last Year	43.1%		This grade is based on the percentage of respondents who indicated they are financially worse-off compared to one year prior. The grade was given a weight of 25/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
People Paying More than 30% of Income on Housing	37.8%		This grade is based on the percentage of respondents who indicated they are spending 30% or more of their income on housing. The grade was given a weight of 20/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
People Having Trouble Accessing Healthcare	30.1%		This grade is based on the percentage of respondents who indicated they 'somewhat disagree' or 'strongly disagree' with the statement 'I can access and receive healthcare anytime I need to' AND stated the reason was due to one or more of the following reasons: 'I can't take time off work'; 'I don't have healthcare coverage'; 'I don't have money for medication'. The grade was given a weight of 10/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Government Support Recipients Who Say Rates are Insufficient to Keep up with Cost of Living	44.4%		This grade is based on the percentage of individuals who indicated that they 'personally receive some form of social security benefit or support' AND indicated that 'social assistance rates aren't high enough to help me keep up with the cost of living'. The grade was given a weight of 25/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Percent of Income Spent on Fixed Costs beyond Housing	55.0%		This grade is based on the combination of results from several questions asking the average amount individuals spend on fixed costs like internet, transport, groceries, and utilities. The average amounts spent were converted into a portion of income for those earning \$75,000 a year or less (given in a range from lowest to highest). This number is the higher end of the range provided. The grade was given a weight of 20/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).

## SECTION 1: CONTEXT

Ontario received an overall grade of D in this section. Key contributors to this grade were failing grades in the Accessibility of Health Care – the worst in country – and Spending More than 30% of Income on Housing indicators.

Ontario's Accessibility of Health Care grade falls far behind that of comparable provinces with large populations. Quebec and BC received a C and C- respectively. The difference between Ontario and other provinces on this indicator is stark: 30.1% of people in Ontario report having difficulty accessing Health Care. PEI's 22.3% is the next worst rate.

Ontario also scores an F grade in the People Spending More than 30% of Income on Housing indicator, among the worst in Canada. This comes as less of a surprise as the housing market in Toronto is possibly the most unaffordable in the country.

Ontario received a C+ in the Fixed Costs beyond Housing indicator, which is among the best of the provinces. Unfortunately, with so many Ontarians paying such a substantial amount on housing, any income saved in this indicator is soon lost to housing payments.





# ONTARIO: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 2 GRADE: **POVERTY MEASURES**

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE	METHODOLOGY
Poverty Rate (MBM)	7.7%		The poverty rate (MBM) is based on data from the Statistics Canada 2021 Canadian Income Survey <a href="#">table</a> showing poverty and low income statistics by selected demographic characteristics. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 25/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Social Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line (Singles)	34%		This grade is based on the maximum annual social assistance rate (provincial only) for a single unattached individual considered employable compared to the official poverty line of the provincial capital (the Market Basket Measure). The data is from <a href="#">Welfare in Canada 2022</a> , available on Maytree's website. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 15/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Disability Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line	54%		This grade is based on the maximum annual social assistance rate (provincial only) for a single unattached individual with a disability compared to the official poverty line of the provincial capital (the Market Basket Measure). The data is from <a href="#">Welfare in Canada 2022</a> , available on Maytree's website. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 15/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Unemployment Rate	5.1%		This grade is based on Statistics Canada's <a href="#">Labour force characteristics by province</a> , monthly adjusted. This data is from March 2023. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 15/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Food Insecurity Rate	19.2%		This grade is based on the combination of Marginal, Moderate, and Severe food insecurity rates for all persons in 2022 from the Statistics Canada's <a href="#">Canadian Income Survey (CIS)</a> (2021). The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 30/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).

## SECTION 2: **CONTEXT**

Ontario received an overall grade of D in this section due to its relatively average performances across the board.

Contributing to this grade was an F in the social assistance rate for single individuals. Ontario is among the worst provinces in this indicator, with only Alberta and New Brunswick scoring lower.

Ontario's C- in the Food Insecurity Rates indicator is the province's best grade in this section but it still falls well short of BC's and Quebec's rates of B- and A- respectively.

As the most populous and well-resourced province in the country, Ontario should be performing above average in many of these indicators. Efforts to improve its performance can start with significant increases to social assistance rates, to help bring recipients out of poverty and reduce food insecurity rates in the province.



# ONTARIO: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 3 GRADE: MATERIAL DEPRIVATION

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE	METHODOLOGY
Severely Inadequate Standard of Living	12.4%		This grade is based on the % of individuals who were unable to afford 5 or more items from a list of items considered necessary for an adequate standard of living. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 60/100. Grades were determined using a grading scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Inadequate Standard of Living	32.0%		This grade is based on the % of individuals who were unable to afford 2 or more items from a list of items considered necessary for an adequate standard of living. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 40/100. Grades were determined using a grading scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).

### SECTION 3: CONTEXT

**\*A material deprivation index (MDI) is a measure that assesses the extent to which individuals lack access to a list of basic needs. Someone who can afford all items on this list would be living an adequate standard of living. This index allows us to gauge a person's level of economic well-being without looking at income.**

Compared to other provinces, Ontario has a below-average standard of living according to the Material Deprivation Index. It received a D- for this section. This is the third-lowest provincial grade in Canada, behind Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

Ontario is performing worse than BC and Quebec, comparable provinces, that each received a D+ in this section.

Unfortunately, nearly one-third of the residents in the province are missing two or more indicators that are considered necessary for a decent standard of living.

Across the country, the most common items that people are unable to afford are the ability to:

- Pay for an unexpected expense of \$500 from their own resources.
- Repair or replace broken or damaged furniture.
- Repair or replace broken or damaged electronic goods (ie. refrigerator, washing machine, laptop).
- Spend a small amount of money on themselves each week.



# ONTARIO: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 4 GRADE: LEGISLATIVE PROGRESS

INDICATOR TITLE

GRADE

Legislative Progress



### SECTION 4: CONTEXT

Poverty is growing and deepening in Ontario and is exacerbated by political decisions that have not only failed to quell its rise, but often also increase the challenges. Residents face a competitive and unaffordable housing market, high fixed costs, and the worst access to health care in the country. These pressures are even more acute for racialized communities, who on average have lower incomes and struggle with poverty at much higher rates than the rest of the province.

Notable developments include:

- [Increasing the minimum wage](#) from \$15.50/hour to \$16.55/hour.
- Updating social assistance by temporarily doubling [Guaranteed Annual Income System](#) (GAINS) payments and indexing them to inflation. [Ontario Disability Support Program](#) (ODSP) payments were increased by 6.5%, the earnings exemption increased to \$1000 annually, and the program was indexed to inflation.
- Improving local transit for [107 municipalities](#).
- Investing in job training with several projects, including:
  - [\\$6.5 million investment to support five free job training projects](#) to support 3,770 people with disabilities to find jobs.
  - [\\$6.9 million to support women](#) to build skills and find employment.
  - [\\$6.8 million investment to Ontario First Nations Economic Developers Association](#) (OFNEDA) to help deliver training to First Nations communities to support economic growth.
  - [\\$224 million to build and upgrade training centres](#) to get more people into the skilled trades

[Ontario's Housing Affordability Task Force](#), backed up by other [independent research](#), has proposed that the province needs to build 1.5 million new homes over the next 10 years to address the affordability crisis and provide sufficient housing to accommodate population growth. The province has taken this target on board in theory, but its actions have not reflected the urgency of the problem. While Ontario has announced a handful of investments in housing this year, they are insufficient to meet its target. Meanwhile, housing experts warn that recent policy actions may worsen the affordability crisis.



# ONTARIO: REPORT CARD

This year, the province has moderately increased social assistance for some groups, notably supports for seniors and for people with disabilities. However, other supports – including LIFT and [Ontario Works](#) – have not been increased. Ontario Works in particular has remained stagnant for five years and incomes from the support are substantially below the poverty rate for all family types. Ontario has put much of its focus on investing in job training for a variety of demographics across the province, in line with its aim to reduce the number of people relying on social assistance.

Ontario faces many challenges that are driving increasingly more individuals and families into poverty. Despite the resources that a province like Ontario has, the actions taken are nowhere near sufficient to help combat poverty. A comprehensive and ambitious strategy that incorporates rapid building of affordable housing, better social assistance, job training, and health care is needed if the province truly wants to reduce poverty.

For the above reasons, Ontario received an F for this section. The government has failed to take substantive steps this year to meaningfully address poverty. A lack of legislative action on housing in particular will likely result in worsening conditions for residents in the province if this trend continues.

Food Banks  
Canada



Banques alimentaires  
Canada

B-

# 2023

POVERTY REPORT CARD ANALYSIS

**QUEBEC**



# QUEBEC: AT A GLANCE



## SECTION 1 GRADE: EXPERIENCE OF POVERTY

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
People Feeling Worse off Compared to Last Year	33.7%	B+
People Paying More than 30% of Income on Housing	34.8%	D+
People Having Trouble Accessing Healthcare	12.7%	C
Government Support Recipients Who Say Rates are Insufficient to Keep up with Cost of Living	39.6%	C-
Percent of Income Spent on Fixed Costs beyond Housing	57.2%	D+



## SECTION 2 GRADE: POVERTY MEASURES

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
Poverty Rate (MBM)	5.2%	A-
Social Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line (Singles)	89%	A
Disability Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line	69%	C
Unemployment Rate	4.2%	C
Food Insecurity Rate	14.7%	A-



## SECTION 3 GRADE: MATERIAL DEPRIVATION

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
Severely Inadequate Standard of Living	11.6%	D+
Inadequate Standard of Living	26.0%	D+



## SECTION 4 GRADE: LEGISLATIVE PROGRESS

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
Legislative Progress	N/A	B

# QUEBEC

CONTEXT

CONTRIBUTING  
FACTORS

POLITICAL AND  
POLICY LANDSCAPE

LOOKING  
AHEAD

POLICY  
RECOMMENDATIONS

REPORT  
CARD



## CONTEXT

In 2002, Quebec became the first province in Canada to enact a poverty reduction strategy. Since then, the strategy has been revisited every five years to assess and renew the provincial government's efforts to combat poverty and social exclusion. In addition, Quebec's overall approach to poverty-related issues, and indeed its broader social policies, is distinct from those of much of the rest of Canada.

**A Distinct Focus on Employment** – The first notable feature is the Government of Quebec's historical focus on employment as the primary solution for addressing poverty and social exclusion. This focus was central to the province's first poverty reduction action plan, released in April 2004. Aspects of both the plan and later policies fostered the development of various initiatives to supplement low incomes and incentivize the transition from social assistance benefits to employment.

One example of these initiatives is the Work Premium Tax Credits, refundable tax credits meant to encourage low-income citizens to enter or remain in the workforce. The credits are offered to workers whose annual pay falls below the maximum allowed cut-off. The maximum annual payment ranges from \$961.18 for a single person to \$3,351.50 for a couple with at least one child.

**Primacy of Support for Families and Children** – Quebec also offers a high level of support for families and households with children. The early introduction of a universal childcare program was central to this support and has been a defining policy of Quebec's social programs (though not targeted at households with low incomes).

Other initiatives to support families with children have also been introduced – for example, the Family Allowance and the Solidarity Tax Credit. As well as supporting low-income families, these initiatives have been credited with helping to address child poverty in the province. Quebec has the second-lowest rate of child poverty in Canada: 14.3%.



# QUEBEC

## CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

Quebec performs much better than the rest of the country when it comes to analyzing poverty metrics. When people living in Quebec were asked if they feel financially worse off than they did a year ago, they responded more positively than people anywhere else in the country, with 34% stating that they feel worse off. This number stands out next to the remaining provinces where an average of 47% say that they feel worse off than a year prior.

The poverty rates in Quebec are the lowest in the country, as are the food insecurity rates. While some people are struggling to make ends meet, the social assistance system in Quebec performs much better than in other provinces and people are largely more satisfied with it than people in other provinces are with their systems.

With that said, there is always room for growth. **Even though food insecurity rates are low, 15% of the province still struggles with it.** Furthermore, **social assistance rates are still well below the poverty line,** which leaves people who rely on these last-resort systems in an impossible situation. Findings from our survey also demonstrate that there's a **large difference in the poverty experience for visible minorities living in Quebec.** These discrepancies tell us that Quebec needs to make a concerted effort to address the gaps and ensure that there are no groups struggling significantly more than others.

**14.3%**

rate of child poverty in Quebec is the second lowest Canada

**30%**

of racialized Quebecers feel social assistance rates aren't high enough

**42%**

of racialized Quebecers feel financially worse off than they did one year ago

**9.3%**

increase in food prices in Quebec is the second highest in Canada

Although overall rates of poverty and food insecurity remain relatively low in Quebec, residents spend 12.4% of household income on food-related costs, which is among the highest of the provinces. This compares to 11% nationally and 10.7% of household expenditures in Ontario. Quebec has also experienced the second-highest increase in food prices—9.3%—over the past year, from April 2022 to 2023.

Quebec is ahead of the rest of the country, but it must continue moving forward to stay ahead and to keep Quebec a province where poverty struggles to find a foothold.

**Sociodemographic Considerations\*** – Despite Quebec's leadership in the poverty realm, there is a surprising poverty gap between racialized communities in Quebec and the rest of the province.

\*Quebec is one of the three provinces with a large enough sample size to report on racialized communities in our survey.

# QUEBEC

Starting with employment related issues, racialized communities in Quebec are 11 percentage points more likely to report that **low wages are impacting their ability to make ends meet**. Even more staggering, is that individuals in this group are 14 percentage points more likely to report that **mental health is affecting their ability to find work, work effectively, or maintain finances**.

With employment challenges, comes more reliance on government social services. Unfortunately, **30% of the individuals who are part of racialized communities believe that social assistance rates aren't high enough to keep up with the rising cost of living** (almost double than the provincial average of 17%).

What's equally concerning is that **half of the respondents in this group also have challenges navigating the tax system**. This challenge navigating the tax system may result in deserved benefits not being collected by those who need them. Making matters worse, 30% find it hard to access social services which may be cutting them off from other much needed forms of support.

Unfortunately, racialized people in Quebec are no exception when it comes to the struggles with affordable housing. Within the demographic, **36% say that it's hard to keep up with rising rents** (8 percentage points higher than the provincial average).

With all this in mind, it's not surprising to find that **42% of racialized Quebecers feel financially worse off than they did one year ago**, which is 8 percentage points higher than the provincial average. The provincial government will need to take steps to address the disparity in experience between racialized and non-racialized citizens.

## POLITICAL AND POLICY LANDSCAPE

The poverty reduction framework is revisited approximately every five years in Quebec, and the most recent review took place in 2017 (for the 2017–2023 period). Within that plan, the government announced its intention to introduce a basic income for Quebecers with a severely limited capacity for employment. Other measures fall under four categories:

1. lift over 100,000 people out of poverty and increase the incomes of people living in poverty (e.g., progressively increase last-resort financial benefits, support training for young people),
2. invest to improve social housing,
3. encourage the social participation of individuals and families with low incomes and mobilize communities (e.g., improve access to healthy, nutritious, and affordable food, improve computer skills), and
4. research and assessment: Make government action to combat poverty and social exclusion more effective.

In 2018, the government introduced a \$400 refundable tax credit for seniors with low incomes, and in 2021 and 2022, it introduced several one-time tax credits to help individuals deal with the rising cost of living.

The provincial government in Quebec is currently in the process of setting out its goals for the next phase of its poverty reduction strategy. With the rising cost of living, extreme housing prices, and shifts in the modern job economy, the province will need to continue to find innovative policy solutions.

## LOOKING AHEAD

Quebec's 2023–2024 budget provides a glimmer of hope compared to many other provincial budgets this year, as it includes significant commitments to increasing affordability in general across the province. However, it does not include increases to social assistance rates for people who are ineligible for the Basic Income Program for people with a severely limited capacity for employment.

The budget includes a \$1 billion investment to encourage affordable housing by increasing the supply of social and affordable housing and \$53.2 million by 2027–2028 for the Rent Supplement Program. There are also significant investments to increase mental health, homelessness, and addiction services; \$30 million to reduce food insecurity; and \$121 million to strengthen the services offered to Indigenous people and make such services easier to access and provide further housing assistance in Indigenous communities.

Looking ahead on 2023-24, Quebec must follow through on these promises and continue to make headway in the next phase of its poverty reduction plan.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

### Accountability

#### 1. Establish a new poverty reduction strategy, with the ambitious goal to end poverty by 2030

Quebec leads the way in poverty reduction across Canada, with many of the core elements that are essential to ensure economic opportunity for all in place, including:

- higher benefits that are indexed to inflation,
- equitable income supports for families,
- affordable and universal childcare, and
- a sizable proportion of the rental market that is affordable for the lowest income quintile.

Much of this success is down to the governments and policy efforts of two decades ago. It is ironic that the first province to establish and pass into law a provincial poverty strategy in 2004 has not updated its own strategy since 2017. And much of the progress on poverty reduction in the province realized in the last several years has been thanks to a combination of leadership from the federal government and a tight labour market that has improved wages and job opportunities.

With the 2023 targets of the 2017 plan about to expire, it is imperative the Quebec government approach its efforts with renewed ambition. We recommend that a revised plan be framed around the necessary work of moving from a focus on poverty reduction to a focus on poverty elimination, with the goal of achieving this ambitious but achievable social project by the close of the decade. Having reduced the poverty rate by nearly two-thirds—from 13.5% in 2015 to 5.2% in 2021—it is entirely possible to close this gap to near zero. But it will require effective leadership.

An early and achievable priority area for the strategy could involve family benefits. Provincial income support and other transfers already equate to 92% of the market basket poverty line for a couple with two children, and 81% for single parents with one child.

# QUEBEC

## Affordable Housing

### 2. Accelerate the construction of purpose-built affordable rental housing

Similar to our recommendations for the province of Ontario, we recommend Quebec consider introducing a provincial housing accelerator fund. The program can be implemented using a combination of financing tools to better assist non-profit housing providers with the cost of land acquisition and capital grants, along with capital cost allowances and capital loss pooling provisions, targeted specifically at private developers who commit to rental affordability targets as part of a particular development project.

## Cost of Living and Income Support

### 3. Pioneer a low-income food benefit

To address the higher expenditures on food in the province, the Quebec government should look at introducing a permanent low-income food benefit to help people in low- and modest-income households who already receive the GST credit.

### 4. Balance Disability Social Assistance Rates

Quebec is the only province in the country with disability assistance rates that lag behind assistance rates for employable individuals. With almost \$5000 a year less in assistance, residents with a disability are put to a greater disadvantage than they already face. We recommend that the province bring the disability assistance rates in parity with individuals without a disability.



# QUEBEC: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 1 GRADE: EXPERIENCE OF POVERTY

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE	METHODOLOGY
People Feeling Worse off Compared to Last Year	33.7%	B+	This grade is based on the percentage of respondents who indicated they are financially worse-off compared to one year prior. The grade was given a weight of 25/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
People Paying More than 30% of Income on Housing	34.8%	D+	This grade is based on the percentage of respondents who indicated they are spending 30% or more of their income on housing. The grade was given a weight of 20/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
People Having Trouble Accessing Healthcare	12.7%	C	This grade is based on the percentage of respondents who indicated they 'somewhat disagree' or 'strongly disagree' with the statement 'I can access and receive healthcare anytime I need to' AND stated the reason was due to one or more of the following reasons: 'I can't take time off work'; 'I don't have healthcare coverage'; 'I don't have money for medication'. The grade was given a weight of 10/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Government Support Recipients Who Say Rates are Insufficient to Keep up with Cost of Living	39.6%	C-	This grade is based on the percentage of individuals who indicated that they 'personally receive some form of social security benefit or support' AND indicated that 'social assistance rates aren't high enough to help me keep up with the cost of living'. The grade was given a weight of 25/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Percent of Income Spent on Fixed Costs beyond Housing	57.2%	D+	This grade is based on the combination of results from several questions asking the average amount individuals spend on fixed costs like internet, transport, groceries, and utilities. The average amounts spent were converted into a portion of income for those earning \$75,000 a year or less (given in a range from lowest to highest). This number is the higher end of the range provided. The grade was given a weight of 20/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).

## SECTION 1: CONTEXT

Quebec received an overall grade of C in this section, scoring highest of all the provinces.

It received a B+ in the Worse off Compared to Last Year indicator, performing the strongest nationally. However, while Quebec did exceptionally well on a comparative scale, over one-third of residents in the province say they feel worse off financially compared to a year prior. This number is too high and will need to decrease in future years if Quebec is to continue receiving a strong grade.

Quebec also performed quite well on housing costs in comparison to similar provinces like Ontario and BC, which both received F grades. Once again, steps will still need to be taken to improve affordability as just over one in three residents still pay more than 30% of their income on housing.

Quebec leads Ontario in every indicator outside of Percent of Income Spent on Fixed Costs beyond Housing. The province should focus on reducing the cost of every day needs like Internet, transportation, and groceries to help it build on efforts it has already made to reduce poverty.



# QUEBEC: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 2 GRADE: **POVERTY MEASURES**

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE	METHODOLOGY
Poverty Rate (MBM)	5.2%	A-	The poverty rate (MBM) is based on data from the Statistics Canada 2021 Canadian Income Survey <a href="#">table</a> showing poverty and low income statistics by selected demographic characteristics. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 25/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Social Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line (Singles)	89%	A	This grade is based on the maximum annual social assistance rate (provincial only) for a single unattached individual considered employable compared to the official poverty line of the provincial capital (the Market Basket Measure). The data is from <a href="#">Welfare in Canada 2022</a> , available on Maytree's website. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 15/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Disability Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line	69%	C	This grade is based on the maximum annual social assistance rate (provincial only) for a single unattached individual with a disability compared to the official poverty line of the provincial capital (the Market Basket Measure). The data is from <a href="#">Welfare in Canada 2022</a> , available on Maytree's website. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 15/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Unemployment Rate	4.2%	C	This grade is based on Statistics Canada's <a href="#">Labour force characteristics by province</a> , monthly adjusted. This data is from March 2023. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 15/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Food Insecurity Rate	14.7%	A-	This grade is based on the combination of Marginal, Moderate, and Severe food insecurity rates for all persons in 2022 from the Statistics Canada's <a href="#">Canadian Income Survey (CIS)</a> (2021). The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 30/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).

## SECTION 2: **CONTEXT**

Quebec received an overall grade of B+ in this section. As with section 1, it performed much better in most indicators than the rest of the country. Quebec's performance in this section is the best in the country by a large margin.

This difference in performance compared to other provinces can be partially explained by Quebec's significantly lower poverty and food insecurity rates.

Still, nearly one in six residents experience food insecurity. While this is comparably better than the rest of the country, the rates are still too high.

Of note is that Quebec is the only province that provides less social assistance to single adults with a disability than single adults considered employable. This is one area in which the province can take steps to improve in the coming year.



# QUEBEC: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 3 GRADE: MATERIAL DEPRIVATION

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE	METHODOLOGY
Severely Inadequate Standard of Living	11.6%		This grade is based on the % of individuals who were unable to afford 5 or more items from a list of items considered necessary for an adequate standard of living. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 60/100. Grades were determined using a grading scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Inadequate Standard of Living	26.0%		This grade is based on the % of individuals who were unable to afford 2 or more items from a list of items considered necessary for an adequate standard of living. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 40/100. Grades were determined using a grading scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).

### SECTION 3: CONTEXT

**\*A material deprivation index (MDI) is a measure that assesses the extent to which individuals lack access to a list of basic needs. Someone who can afford all items on this list would be living an adequate standard of living. This index allows us to gauge a person's level of economic well-being without looking at income.**

Compared to other provinces, Quebec scored a slightly above average standard of living according to the Material Deprivation Index. It received a D+ for this section.

Compared to similar provinces like BC and Ontario, which received a D+ and D- grade respectively, Quebec is performing similarly.

Unfortunately, more than one-quarter of residents in the province are missing two or more items that are considered necessary for a decent standard of living.

Considering Quebec's track record in the above sections, its grades in this section should be higher.

Across the country, the most common items that people are unable to afford are the ability to:

- Pay for an unexpected expense of \$500 from their own resources.
- Repair or replace broken or damaged furniture.
- Repair or replace broken or damaged electronic goods (ie. refrigerator, washing machine, laptop).
- Spend a small amount of money on themselves each week.





# QUEBEC: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 4 GRADE: LEGISLATIVE PROGRESS

INDICATOR TITLE

GRADE

Legislative Progress



### SECTION 4: CONTEXT

Quebec leads Canada in experimenting with innovative policy solutions, and this has resulted in the lowest rates of poverty and food insecurity nationally. However, residents are facing inflationary pressures, a rising cost of living and an increasingly competitive and expensive housing market.

Notable developments in 2023 include:

- [Increasing the minimum wage](#) from \$14.25/hour to \$15.25/hour.
- Committing [\\$1 billion to build more housing](#) (details on timelines are unclear)
  - \$650 million of this amount is earmarked to accelerate the construction of 5,250 social and affordable housing units.
  - \$350 million to support households struggling to find housing and pay their rent, partly through the solidarity tax credit in 2024.
  - \$43 million for projects in northern communities.
- Injecting [\\$236.5M to accelerate the construction of more than 2,600 new social and affordable housing units](#) in several regions of Quebec.
- [Launching the Basic Income Program](#) to support people with severe employment challenges. Those eligible will benefit from an increase in assistance of up to 40%.
- Increasing [tax deductions](#) for families with children who receive child support and several housing benefits.
- Offering [\\$26.1 million for Alliances pour la solidarité](#) to continue to implement its measures to fight poverty beyond March 2023.
- Increased support for newcomers in precarious situations, including [\\$3.5 million to organizations that support newcomers with resources](#) including shelter and family support and [\\$5.3 million to improve services](#) for young newcomers to help with community and social integration.
- Capping [indexation rate of Hydro-Quebec](#) at 3%/year.
- [Increasing amounts](#) received through the Home Adaptation Program (PAD) and the Small Accessible Establishments (PEA) program, which contribute to improving the living conditions of people with disabilities and facilitating their daily activities, representing a \$34,000 and \$5,000 increase respectively.



# QUEBEC: REPORT CARD

Quebec has taken ambitious steps to increase the quantity of housing, including affordable housing, and invested in services to support organizations that aid communities and individuals with accessing housing, including those experiencing homelessness. Compared to the rest of the country, Quebec leads in its commitment to increasing housing stock.

Racialized communities in Quebec face significant inequalities, with 42% stating that they feel worse off compared to last year. The provincial average is just 33.7%. Quebec has taken some action this year to help racialized communities but will need to continue expanding its efforts.

With the above measures, Quebec residents will continue to experience the lowest poverty rates in the country. Moving forward, the province should consistently monitor and address disparities experienced by racialized Canadians and maintain its focus on building more housing while expanding social assistance rates.

For the above reasons, Quebec received a B for this section. The government has introduced legislation that should lead to positive outcomes for residents with low incomes. In particular, they have introduced a very ambitious housing plan. However, more action needs to be taken on social assistance to ensure those relying on support do not face worsening circumstances.

Food Banks  
Canada



Banques alimentaires  
Canada



# 2023 POVERTY REPORT CARD ANALYSIS

## NEW BRUNSWICK



# NEW BRUNSWICK: AT A GLANCE



## SECTION 1 GRADE: EXPERIENCE OF POVERTY

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
People Feeling Worse off Compared to Last Year	46.3%	D-
People Paying More than 30% of Income on Housing	40.2%	F
People Having Trouble Accessing Healthcare	20.4%	D-
Government Support Recipients Who Say Rates are Insufficient to Keep up with Cost of Living	42.2%	D+
Percent of Income Spent on Fixed Costs beyond Housing	59.9%	D-



## SECTION 2 GRADE: POVERTY MEASURES

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
Poverty Rate (MBM)	6.7%	C
Social Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line (Singles)	31%	F
Disability Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line	43%	F
Unemployment Rate	5.8%	D
Food Insecurity Rate	22.7%	F



## SECTION 3 GRADE: MATERIAL DEPRIVATION

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
Severely Inadequate Standard of Living	17.3%	F
Inadequate Standard of Living	28.7%	D-



## SECTION 4 GRADE: LEGISLATIVE PROGRESS

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
Legislative Progress	N/A	D

# NEW BRUNSWICK

CONTEXT

CONTRIBUTING  
FACTORS

POLITICAL AND  
POLICY LANDSCAPE

LOOKING  
AHEAD

POLICY  
RECOMMENDATIONS

REPORT  
CARD



## CONTEXT

The combination of low wages, high living costs, extreme housing conditions, and the lowest social assistance rates in Canada places New Brunswick behind most other provinces in the elimination of poverty.

Survey respondents reported that they are struggling across the board with all issues related to and measures of poverty. Despite having an economy of natural resources, the province continues to struggle with unemployment and low economic opportunity.

## CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

New Brunswick's rising poverty rates can be attributed to a high cost of living and low wages. Additionally, certain groups—for example, Indigenous peoples and immigrants—may face systemic barriers that prevent them from accessing the same opportunities as other residents, exacerbating cycles of poverty and inequality. Recent surveys reveal that almost half (46%) of residents in the province feel worse off than they did a year ago.

**The Cost Pinch** – The coupling of a high cost of living and low wages is impacting provinces across the country, but New Brunswick is particularly affected. More than **one-third of all residents find that low wages are impacting their ability to make ends meet, and nearly 2 in 5 people report that they are struggling to access fresh and affordable food.**

**Difficulties Navigating Crucial Systems** – As more people struggle, more will turn to the inadequate social safety net for help. Unfortunately, **27% of New Brunswick residents struggle to access social services and 50% have difficulties navigating the tax system**, which means they may not collect benefits they are eligible to claim. Even once benefits are collected, New Brunswick has the worst social assistance adequacy in the country. **Assistance amounts only provide enough to bring people one-third of the way to the poverty line.**

# NEW BRUNSWICK

**The Worst of the Housing Crisis** – An examination of the policy issues that are top of mind for New Brunswick reveals a lot about how people are struggling: **51% say affordable housing is needed, 52% say reduce rent, 65% say reduce utilities**, and 51% say increase the minimum wage. Looking at the results of the provincial report card, one can see that 40% of people in the province are spending more than 30% of their income on housing (the highest of any province), and households with low incomes spend an additional **60% on other fixed costs**.

Between 2016 and 2021 there has been an estimated 8,600 fewer housing units with monthly costs below \$750. With 25,585 renter households in New Brunswick earning below \$30,000, it is imperative to have affordable housing options.

Furthermore, the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) contains ambiguities that can lead to the exploitation of renters and more unaffordable housing conditions. For example, under the current RTA, the amount by which a landlord can increase monthly rental costs is undefined, and only a tenant of five years or more is eligible to dispute rental increases. Since 2015, the average rent paid by New Brunswick households has increased by 42%, nearly 10% more than in Canada as a whole (34%).

Housing is certainly playing a major role in the struggles of most New Brunswickers. Wages are too low and inflation too high for many to cover the high costs of housing and still have enough money to pay for other basic necessities.

**2 IN 5**

New Brunswickers are struggling to access fresh and affordable food

**40%**

of people in the province are spending more than 30% of their income on housing

**65%**

of residents in New Brunswick say they need a reduction on their utilities

**+25K**

renter households in New Brunswick earn less than \$30,000 annually

## POLITICAL AND POLICY LANDSCAPE

The current provincial government, led by Premier Blaine Higgs, has claimed that the challenges of housing affordability and the cost of living are a top priority. Since 2021, the government has introduced two key policies to address these issues:

- **Social assistance reform and inflation indexing**
  - A reform that indexed all social assistance rates to inflation, with rates increasing each year on April 1 based on the change in the New Brunswick Consumer Price Index. To date, New Brunswick and Quebec are the only provinces that index social assistance to inflation.
  - In 2021, wage exemptions increased from monthly earnings of \$150 plus 30% of each additional dollar for single people and \$200 for households to \$500 for both.

# NEW BRUNSWICK

- Cap on rent increases
  - Until 2022, New Brunswick had no cap on rent increases. In March of 2022, the government changed that when they introduced a 3.8% cap.
  - The cap expired at the end of 2022, and several rental residents across the province began seeing [uncapped rental increases](#) immediately after.

New Brunswick has a poverty reduction strategy, which was reviewed in 2022. The province is making progress toward achieving its set goals, but things are moving slowly. Moreover, the goals set within the strategy are modest and do not provide a clear strategy for a pathway out of poverty.

## LOOKING AHEAD

The New Brunswick government has a daunting task ahead of it as it seeks to make significant progress in addressing poverty. Key priorities should include ensuring wages in the province meet a living wage standard and addressing the ongoing housing crisis. The government must prioritize policies that focus on young people, seniors, single parents, LGBTQ+ people, people with disabilities, and people living with addictions and mental health issues.

The 2023–2024 New Brunswick budget shows that the province is making some effort to reduce poverty, but there is still more to be done. The government announced a 7.3% increase to social assistance rates under the Transitional Assistance Program and the Extended Benefits Program and \$37 million in funding to improve access to affordable childcare.

When it comes to making housing more affordable, the New Brunswick government did not make significant additional investments beyond the previously announced \$100 million to build 380 new public housing units. While the government has committed more than \$100 million toward building these new public housing units, that is still far below the amount required to replenish the affordable housing stock.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

### Affordable Housing

#### 1. Create enhanced protections for renters

To remedy the lack of protections provided by the Residential Tenancies Act, New Brunswick should, at a minimum, adopt a rent increase guideline policy to better control the rent increases that tenants are exposed to and to ensure that tenants have a robust ability to challenge the rate.

#### 2. Replenish the affordable housing supply, which has decreased by 25% between 2016 and 2021

We recommend the government:

- accelerate its objective to increase the number of new public housing units and step up its targeted investments, by aiming to build a minimum of 500 units this year, rather than 380 as originally planned, and
- create a plan to build at least 2,500 more by 2025.



# NEW BRUNSWICK

Should New Brunswick not demonstrate faster progress in addressing this major barrier to poverty reduction, the federal government should examine the tools it has at its disposal to adjust federal transfers to the province, particularly those under the Canada-New Brunswick housing agreement and the province's access to the federal Housing Accelerator Fund.

## Decent Work and Education

### 3. Develop a youth employment and training strategy

New Brunswick has one of the lowest levels of post-secondary education attainment in Canada, and the second highest rate of youth aged 15–29 who are neither in education or training nor looking for work/working (NEET). The provincial government must work to change these realities, starting with the development of an ambitious youth employment strategy that will set the goal of reducing the NEET rate by 25% within the next three years. This would bring New Brunswick closer into line with neighbouring Quebec and PEI.

### 4. Focus on making work pay better and connecting youth with skilled trades opportunities

As part of the proposed youth employment strategy, New Brunswick should consider adopting a version of a refundable tax credit for households with low incomes, modelled on the enhanced LIFT credit we have proposed for Ontario.

Similarly, New Brunswick should take advantage of the growing demand for skilled trades and introduce an apprenticeship award that would provide several thousand dollars in bonuses to youth who were not previously working or in training and have returned to school to learn a trade. This should also be made generally available for provincial social assistance recipients transitioning into a trade, and would provide a top-up equivalent to approximately six months on benefits.

## Income Support

### 5. Further increase the wage exemption from its 2021 increases

The provincial government should continue its efforts to help single people and households deal with the issue of affordability by further enhancing wage exemptions for people who receive financial assistance. We recommend allowing for a monthly earnings exemption of \$500 plus 55% of the remaining balance monthly for single people and a monthly exemption of \$800 plus 55% for families. This benefit's initial exemption should be increased to \$700 for single seniors, and \$1,100 for senior households.

### 6. Transition the one-time Emergency Food and Fuel Benefit into a recurring benefit

The Emergency Food and Fuel Benefit provides assistance to individuals, families, and seniors with low incomes. The provincial government should make this a recurring annual benefit instead of a one-time benefit. Additionally, the payment should be increased to \$300 for eligible individuals or \$500 for eligible families.



# NEW BRUNSWICK: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 1 GRADE: EXPERIENCE OF POVERTY

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE	METHODOLOGY
People Feeling Worse off Compared to Last Year	46.3%	D-	This grade is based on the percentage of respondents who indicated they are financially worse-off compared to one year prior. The grade was given a weight of 25/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
People Paying More than 30% of Income on Housing	40.2%	F	This grade is based on the percentage of respondents who indicated they are spending 30% or more of their income on housing. The grade was given a weight of 20/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
People Having Trouble Accessing Healthcare	20.4%	D-	This grade is based on the percentage of respondents who indicated they 'somewhat disagree' or 'strongly disagree' with the statement 'I can access and receive healthcare anytime I need to' AND stated the reason was due to one or more of the following reasons: 'I can't take time off work'; 'I don't have healthcare coverage'; 'I don't have money for medication'. The grade was given a weight of 10/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Government Support Recipients Who Say Rates are Insufficient to Keep up with Cost of Living	42.2%	D+	This grade is based on the percentage of individuals who indicated that they 'personally receive some form of social security benefit or support' AND indicated that 'social assistance rates aren't high enough to help me keep up with the cost of living'. The grade was given a weight of 25/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Percent of Income Spent on Fixed Costs beyond Housing	59.9%	D-	This grade is based on the combination of results from several questions asking the average amount individuals spend on fixed costs like internet, transport, groceries, and utilities. The average amounts spent were converted into a portion of income for those earning \$75,000 a year or less (given in a range from lowest to highest). This number is the higher end of the range provided. The grade was given a weight of 20/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).

### SECTION 1: CONTEXT

New Brunswick received an overall grade of D- in this section. The province consistently performs at or below average compared to other provinces. Its highest grade is a D+ for Sufficiency of Government Support.

Most worryingly, New Brunswick failed in the People Spending More than 30% of Income on Housing indicator, with two in five residents experiencing core housing need. This is the worst grade among the provinces, tied with the North, BC and Ontario.

The D- in the Fixed Costs beyond Housing indicator signals that a significant number of residents in New Brunswick are spending a large percentage of their income on fixed costs on top of the staggering number of people having to pay unacceptably high housing costs.

Overall, New Brunswick ranks lowest in the Maritimes and is among the worst in the country for this section.



# NEW BRUNSWICK: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 2 GRADE: **POVERTY MEASURES**

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE	METHODOLOGY
Poverty Rate (MBM)	6.7%	C	The poverty rate (MBM) is based on data from the Statistics Canada 2021 Canadian Income Survey <a href="#">table</a> showing poverty and low income statistics by selected demographic characteristics. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 25/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Social Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line (Singles)	31%	F	This grade is based on the maximum annual social assistance rate (provincial only) for a single unattached individual considered employable compared to the official poverty line of the provincial capital (the Market Basket Measure). The data is from <a href="#">Welfare in Canada 2022</a> , available on Maytree's website. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 15/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Disability Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line	43%	F	This grade is based on the maximum annual social assistance rate (provincial only) for a single unattached individual with a disability compared to the official poverty line of the provincial capital (the Market Basket Measure). The data is from <a href="#">Welfare in Canada 2022</a> , available on Maytree's website. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 15/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Unemployment Rate	5.8%	D	This grade is based on Statistics Canada's <a href="#">Labour force characteristics by province</a> , monthly adjusted. This data is from March 2023. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 15/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Food Insecurity Rate	22.7%	F	This grade is based on the combination of Marginal, Moderate, and Severe food insecurity rates for all persons in 2022 from the Statistics Canada's <a href="#">Canadian Income Survey (CIS)</a> (2021). The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 30/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).

## SECTION 2: **CONTEXT**

New Brunswick received an overall grade of a D- in this indicator, which is the same grade it received in the Experience of Poverty section.

Key contributors to this grade were its F grades in the following three indicators:

- Social Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line
- Disability Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line
- Food Insecurity Rates.

New Brunswick is among the lowest of all the provinces in these. Overall, though it is relatively on a par with the rest of the Maritime provinces.

One standout in this section is the C grade New Brunswick received in the Poverty Rate indicator. This is one area where it is ahead of most of the country. This grade seems surprising, considering the lower social assistance rates and heightened food insecurity in the provinces. It underscores the importance of factoring in different measures when assessing how well residents are doing. New Brunswick cannot allow lower poverty rates to distract from the objective of improving other indicators.



# NEW BRUNSWICK: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 3 GRADE: MATERIAL DEPRIVATION

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE	METHODOLOGY
Severely Inadequate Standard of Living	17.3%	F	This grade is based on the % of individuals who were unable to afford 5 or more items from a list of items considered necessary for an adequate standard of living. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 60/100. Grades were determined using a grading scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Inadequate Standard of Living	28.7%	D-	This grade is based on the % of individuals who were unable to afford 2 or more items from a list of items considered necessary for an adequate standard of living. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 40/100. Grades were determined using a grading scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).

### SECTION 3: CONTEXT

**\*A material deprivation index (MDI) is a measure that assesses the extent to which individuals lack access to a list of basic needs. Someone who can afford all items on this list would be living an adequate standard of living. This index allows us to gauge a person's level of economic well-being without looking at income.**

Compared to other provinces, New Brunswick has a well-below-average standard of living according to the Material Deprivation Index. The province received a failing grade for this section.

Provinces in the Maritimes are struggling deeply compared to the rest of the country: the only two failing grades for the Material Deprivation section were received by New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

New Brunswick is also tied with Nova Scotia with the highest rate of people living with a Severely Inadequate Standard of Living – roughly one in six.

Additionally, nearly one-third of the residents in the province are missing two or more items that are considered necessary for a decent standard of living.

Across the country, the most common items that people are unable to afford are the ability to:

- Pay for an unexpected expense of \$500 from their own resources.
- Repair or replace broken or damaged furniture.
- Repair or replace broken or damaged electronic goods (ie. refrigerator, washing machine, laptop).
- Spend a small amount of money on themselves each week.



# NEW BRUNSWICK: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 4 GRADE: LEGISLATIVE PROGRESS

INDICATOR TITLE

GRADE

Legislative Progress



### SECTION 4: CONTEXT

New Brunswick has taken action on a number of poverty-related legislations in 2023, including housing and social assistance. While some of this legislation has been welcomed and helpful to those in need, many actions are too small to create the kind of impact needed for real change. Moreover, some changes, like the tax cuts for high-income earners are damaging to the social landscape of the province. That measure will provide the greatest relief to those earning more than [\\$145,000 a year](#) and takes money away from the provincial budget that could be targeted toward low-income households. Additionally, the [efforts](#) made to provide better supports for tenants (in a province where tenants have so few rights) fell short.

Some notable changes include:

- [380 new social housing units](#) over four-years – this is the first social housing investment from the government in 40 years.
- \$13.4 million to fund an increase in social assistance rates.
- \$5.9 million for social assistance reforms.
- [Expansion of eligibility](#) for the New Brunswick Housing Benefit Program to help low-income people who live alone.
- A [second-round](#) of one-time payments through the Emergency Fuel and Food Benefit. This provides \$225 for low-income individuals and \$450 for families.
- Adjusting social assistance [eligibility](#) for people living with non-family roommates.
- Basic personal income amount increased for 2022 taxes.

As one of the country’s most impoverished provinces, New Brunswick must take much bolder steps toward the elimination of poverty. While the increases to social assistance rates are positive, the province still offers the lowest amount in the country and recipients relying on it receive incomes well below the poverty line. In addition, their new housing strategy does not go nearly far enough to provide support for renter; the province still lacks a rent cap and with 3,000 households on the subsidized housing waiting list, 380 new units over four years is a drop in the bucket. Its recent report on poverty progress demonstrates a willingness to address the issue, but real change cannot happen without real long-term dollars being dedicated to housing and expanding a weakened social safety net.

For the above reasons, New Brunswick received a D for this section. The government has taken some minor steps to address poverty by adjusting social assistance eligibility and introducing a new housing strategy. However, it has largely failed to pass legislation that addresses long-term poverty, housing affordability, and the current affordability crisis. If the trend continues, residents’ financial circumstances will likely worsen.

Food Banks  
Canada



Banques alimentaires  
Canada



# 2023

POVERTY REPORT CARD ANALYSIS

# PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND



# PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND: AT A GLANCE



## SECTION 1 GRADE: EXPERIENCE OF POVERTY

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
People Feeling Worse off Compared to Last Year	46.9%	D-
People Paying More than 30% of Income on Housing	35.2%	D
People Having Trouble Accessing Healthcare	22.3%	F
Government Support Recipients Who Say Rates are Insufficient to Keep up with Cost of Living	20.8%	A-
Percent of Income Spent on Fixed Costs beyond Housing	59.1%	D



## SECTION 2 GRADE: POVERTY MEASURES

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
Poverty Rate (MBM)	7.4%	D+
Social Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line (Singles)	64%	C+
Disability Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line	71%	C+
Unemployment Rate	6.6%	F
Food Insecurity Rate	23.6%	F



## SECTION 3 GRADE: MATERIAL DEPRIVATION

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
Severely Inadequate Standard of Living	6.1%	B+
Inadequate Standard of Living	18.4%	A-



## SECTION 4 GRADE: LEGISLATIVE PROGRESS

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
Legislative Progress	N/A	D



# PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

CONTEXT

CONTRIBUTING  
FACTORS

POLITICAL AND  
POLICY LANDSCAPE

LOOKING  
AHEAD

POLICY  
RECOMMENDATIONS

REPORT  
CARD



## CONTEXT

Prince Edward Island (PEI) faces a significant poverty issue: over 7% of its population lives below the poverty line and the food insecurity rate is 24% (nearly one-quarter of the province and the highest rate in the country). With a rapidly aging population, many residents of PEI live on fixed incomes and struggle to cover their basic expenses. Moreover, Indigenous peoples, newcomers, and single-parent families are among those who are disproportionately affected by poverty in the province.

## CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

PEI's high cost of living, increased housing costs, and stagnant wages are major contributing factors to the island's poverty issue. The average income is lower than the national average, and low wages make it challenging for individuals to meet their basic needs. With people earning an average of \$7,000 less each year than the rest of the country, households with low incomes are **spending large portions (up to 60%) of their income on fixed costs** like utilities and transportation. This has resulted in 31% of food bank clients reporting their main income source to be employment income (highest in the country) – a clear sign that wages are not providing enough to bring food to the table.

With 60% of incomes going to fixed costs, there is little left to meet the costs of inflationary housing prices. As such, **1 in 3 individuals are receiving a housing benefit** in PEI.

Exacerbating the issue, PEI remains one of only two provinces that do not index their tax brackets to inflation and does not ensure social assistance payments reflect changes in prices. Over time, this erodes the real value of assistance and leads residents to pay more in taxes without seeing any increases in their real income and having less money to pay for basic necessities like food and shelter.

Additionally, PEI's economy relies heavily on seasonal industries such as agriculture and tourism, which can lead to unemployment or underemployment during off-seasons. Unsurprisingly, the percentage of people in PEI claiming **Employment Insurance is higher than in any other province: 26% of the population.**

# PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

**24%**

of PEI's residents live with food insecurity – the highest rate in the country

**60%**

PEI's low income households are spending the bulk of their income on fixed costs

**1 IN 3**

individuals are receiving a housing benefit in PEI

**26%**

of PEI's residents are claiming Employment Insurance – highest of all provinces

## POLITICAL AND POLICY LANDSCAPE

The PEI Progressive Conservative (PC) government was re-elected in April 2023. As a renewed government in a province that is struggling profoundly, this government should use this term to act decisively on the cost of living crisis.

PEI, like its Atlantic Canada counterparts, is currently grappling with a housing affordability crisis. To address this, the province has recently instituted a rent increase freeze until the end of 2023. That will be followed by a rent increase cap of 3%.

In 2018, the provincial government created a Poverty Reduction Advisory Council to offer advice and input into the development of an action plan to address poverty on PEI over a five-year period. While the process seemed to be moving well through 2019, little headway has been made since.

## LOOKING AHEAD

The Prince Edward Island 2023 budget includes some modest commitments for the health sector, including increased access to pharmaceuticals and mental health supports. The budget also made small commitments to a rent-to-own program, funds to expedite childcare and affordable housing initiatives, and investment in public transit. While all of these commitments are strong signals, larger investments towards these areas will be needed for significant change to occur.

Unfortunately, smaller piecemeal policies will not be enough to help lift people out of poverty. Developing a strategy to do so will be crucial if PEI hopes to find a direction to better social and economic outcomes for its citizens.

Local experts suggest that the government should focus on providing support for key groups, including seniors, single parents, Indigenous peoples, and people living with addictions and mental illnesses. They also recommend introducing a basic income, negotiated with the Government of Canada, which could benefit up to 40% of the province.

# PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

### Inflation Protection

#### 1. Index income in all tax brackets and social payments to inflation

The provincial government has recently committed to both increasing the generosity of a number of tax credits and conducting a review of provincial rates and brackets to make the tax system more competitive and less costly for Islanders. As part of this review, the government should prioritize the introduction of comprehensive indexation, both for brackets and for all credits and payments, including social assistance. Until comprehensive indexation is adopted, any efforts to improve the generosity of programs, particularly in light of recent inflationary pressures, will only constitute temporary, short-term responses.

### Child and Family Benefits

#### 2. Introduce a child benefit program

Unlike other provinces, PEI does not currently have a child benefit program to help families. And yet, it is very close to eradicating child poverty entirely. In 2021, approximately 4.4% of people under the age of 18 lived in households considered to be below the MBM poverty line. While PEI provides significant support for older adults given its disproportionately high number of residents over the age of 65, there is both a social and an economic imperative to help families succeed.

The province should consider introducing a supplemental family benefit, on top of the CCB, which could be used to end child poverty entirely. In the absence of federal cooperation to establish a provincial basic income pilot, this would be a worthwhile interim step to continue to advance the goals of that initiative, while encouraging population and economic growth.

### Income Support

#### 3. Increase the earnings exemptions for single people

Single people who are considered to be employable receive the lowest amount of provincial assistance, which puts them approximately \$3,690 below the deep income poverty threshold. The government should increase the amount of earnings exemptions, allowing for a minimum of \$350 exempt per month plus 40%, instead of the current \$250 per month and 30%, with plans for further increases in the coming years.

#### 4. Adapt 2022's one-time \$100 grocery card for seniors living on low incomes into a recurring grocery allowance

PEI is the only province with explicit targets for food insecurity, going so far as to aim to eliminate food insecurity by 2030. To meet its goals, it should consider adapting the one-time payment provided in 2022 to help offset rising grocery costs to become a recurring form of support for seniors and other groups living on low incomes. We recommend creating a low-income grocery allowance benefit that would pay \$300 annually to people whose incomes are below the MBM cut-off. This would cost approximately \$3.6 million per year, and it could be phased in, beginning with seniors.



# PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 1 GRADE: EXPERIENCE OF POVERTY

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE	METHODOLOGY
People Feeling Worse off Compared to Last Year	46.9%		This grade is based on the percentage of respondents who indicated they are financially worse-off compared to one year prior. The grade was given a weight of 25/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
People Paying More than 30% of Income on Housing	35.2%		This grade is based on the percentage of respondents who indicated they are spending 30% or more of their income on housing. The grade was given a weight of 20/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
People Having Trouble Accessing Healthcare	22.3%		This grade is based on the percentage of respondents who indicated they 'somewhat disagree' or 'strongly disagree' with the statement 'I can access and receive healthcare anytime I need to' AND stated the reason was due to one or more of the following reasons: 'I can't take time off work'; 'I don't have healthcare coverage'; 'I don't have money for medication'. The grade was given a weight of 10/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Government Support Recipients Who Say Rates are Insufficient to Keep up with Cost of Living	20.8%		This grade is based on the percentage of individuals who indicated that they 'personally receive some form of social security benefit or support' AND indicated that 'social assistance rates aren't high enough to help me keep up with the cost of living'. The grade was given a weight of 25/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Percent of Income Spent on Fixed Costs beyond Housing	59.1%		This grade is based on the combination of results from several questions asking the average amount individuals spend on fixed costs like internet, transport, groceries, and utilities. The average amounts spent were converted into a portion of income for those earning \$75,000 a year or less (given in a range from lowest to highest). This number is the higher end of the range provided. The grade was given a weight of 20/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).

## SECTION 1: CONTEXT

Prince Edward Island (PEI) received an overall grade of a C- in the Experience of Poverty section. While several of PEI's grades are below average compared to other provinces, an A- in the Sufficiency of Government Support indicator gives the province an average grade of C-.

With a best in the nation performance in the Sufficiency of Government Support, and D grades for both housing and Fixed Cost Beyond Housing, PEI ranks the best among all the Maritime provinces in the Experience of Poverty section.

However, it ranks the lowest in the Maritimes for the Accessibility of Health Care indicator. This signals that living conditions in the province are a barrier to health care, likely because a large percentage of residents live in rural or remote communities.

Despite receiving an A- in the Sufficiency of Government Support indicator, many PEI residents still struggle with the cost of living, as demonstrated by average or below-average grades in several indicators.



# PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 2 GRADE: **POVERTY MEASURES**

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE	METHODOLOGY
Poverty Rate (MBM)	7.4%		The poverty rate (MBM) is based on data from the Statistics Canada 2021 Canadian Income Survey <a href="#">table</a> showing poverty and low income statistics by selected demographic characteristics. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 25/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Social Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line (Singles)	64%		This grade is based on the maximum annual social assistance rate (provincial only) for a single unattached individual considered employable compared to the official poverty line of the provincial capital (the Market Basket Measure). The data is from <a href="#">Welfare in Canada 2022</a> , available on Maytree's website. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 15/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Disability Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line	71%		This grade is based on the maximum annual social assistance rate (provincial only) for a single unattached individual with a disability compared to the official poverty line of the provincial capital (the Market Basket Measure). The data is from <a href="#">Welfare in Canada 2022</a> , available on Maytree's website. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 15/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Unemployment Rate	6.6%		This grade is based on Statistics Canada's <a href="#">Labour force characteristics by province</a> , monthly adjusted. This data is from March 2023. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 15/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Food Insecurity Rate	23.6%		This grade is based on the combination of Marginal, Moderate, and Severe food insecurity rates for all persons in 2022 from the Statistics Canada's <a href="#">Canadian Income Survey (CIS)</a> (2021). The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 30/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).

## SECTION 2: **CONTEXT**

PEI received an overall grade of D in this section. The other Maritime provinces all scored a D in this section, except Nova Scotia which received a F.

While PEI's performance is consistent with that of the other Maritime provinces, its grades in this section are below average and need to be improved.

A key contributor to the grade is the F grade received in the Food Insecurity Rates indicator, signalling that a significant percentage of residents in PEI are struggling to get food on the table.

Conversely, PEI is doing comparatively well in the assistance rates indicators. It holds the second-best grade of all provinces for both.



# PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 3 GRADE: MATERIAL DEPRIVATION

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE	METHODOLOGY
Severely Inadequate Standard of Living	6.1%	B+	This grade is based on the % of individuals who were unable to afford 5 or more items from a list of items considered necessary for an adequate standard of living. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 60/100. Grades were determined using a grading scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Inadequate Standard of Living	18.4%	A-	This grade is based on the % of individuals who were unable to afford 2 or more items from a list of items considered necessary for an adequate standard of living. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 40/100. Grades were determined using a grading scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).

### SECTION 3: CONTEXT

**\*A material deprivation index (MDI) is a measure that assesses the extent to which individuals lack access to a list of basic needs. Someone who can afford all items on this list would be living an adequate standard of living. This index allows us to gauge a person's level of economic well-being without looking at income.**

Prince Edward Island (PEI) scored the highest grade in the Material Deprivation section with an A-. This means that it has a higher standard of living compared to other provinces.

Compared to other Maritime provinces, PEI performed much better. It is likely that this has to do with the smaller sample size for data collection in the province, but for those who did respond, the outcomes are positive.

Unfortunately, almost one-fifth of the residents in the province are missing two or more items that are considered necessary for a decent standard of living.

Across the country, the most common items that people are unable to afford are the ability to:

- Pay for an unexpected expense of \$500 from their own resources.
- Repair or replace broken or damaged furniture.
- Repair or replace broken or damaged electronic goods (ie. refrigerator, washing machine, laptop).
- Spend a small amount of money on themselves each week.





# PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 4 GRADE: LEGISLATIVE PROGRESS

INDICATOR TITLE

GRADE

Legislative Progress



### SECTION 4: CONTEXT

Prince Edward Island faces similar challenges to those faced by the other Atlantic provinces: high unemployment rates, rising fixed costs, and incredibly high rates of food insecurity.

This year, the province has taken moderate action on housing and supporting residents with the rising cost of living.

Key developments include:

- Introducing several smaller housing initiatives for [new rental](#) units, [130 social housing units](#), and new supportive housing for those [experiencing or at risk of homelessness](#).
- Expanding [public transit](#) and maintaining reduced transit fares.
- Piloting a [Seniors' Food Pilot Program](#) to provide meals to low-income seniors at a flat rate of \$4 per meal.
- Additional supports to reduce the impact of rising costs of living, including a one-time \$500/individual [inflationary support payment](#), a [property tax subsidy](#), and changes to the [income tax](#) system.

Despite being tied for second-worst in the country for access to Health Care, PEI has put little focus this year on improving health services. While the province has expanded its [Catastrophic Drug Program](#) and introduced a [new crisis support hotline](#), households must spend 6.5% of their income on necessary prescription drugs before they receive help with paying for them, which is still too high.

PEI has an aging population, which means more people will be relying on fixed incomes in the face of rising costs. The Seniors' Food Pilot program represents a bright spot in this issue but remains a Band-Aid solution to the underlying issue that seniors' incomes are too low to allow them to feed themselves.

Overall, more permanent measures must be introduced to address the root causes of poverty. Low wages, high unemployment, and insufficient welfare incomes mean that many people will continue to struggle without a targeted plan to tackle these issues. Unique among the provinces, PEI legislature has expressed interest in piloting a basic income program which, if pursued, could have a transformational impact on the living standards of residents.

For the above reasons, PEI received a D for this section. It has largely failed to pass legislation that substantially addresses key drivers of poverty, in particular housing. If the trend continues, residents' financial circumstances will likely worsen.



Food Banks  
Canada



Banques alimentaires  
Canada



# 2023

POVERTY REPORT CARD ANALYSIS

**NOVA SCOTIA**



# NOVA SCOTIA: AT A GLANCE



## SECTION 1 GRADE: EXPERIENCE OF POVERTY

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
People Feeling Worse off Compared to Last Year	52.5%	F
People Paying More than 30% of Income on Housing	35.3%	D
People Having Trouble Accessing Healthcare	8.8%	B-
Government Support Recipients Who Say Rates are Insufficient to Keep up with Cost of Living	38.5%	C-
Percent of Income Spent on Fixed Costs beyond Housing	65.6%	F



## SECTION 2 GRADE: POVERTY MEASURES

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
Poverty Rate (MBM)	8.6%	F
Social Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line (Singles)	34%	F
Disability Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line	47%	F
Unemployment Rate	5.7%	D
Food Insecurity Rate	22.0%	F



## SECTION 3 GRADE: MATERIAL DEPRIVATION

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
Severely Inadequate Standard of Living	17.8%	F
Inadequate Standard of Living	32.8%	F



## SECTION 4 GRADE: LEGISLATIVE PROGRESS

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
Legislative Progress	N/A	F

# NOVA SCOTIA

CONTEXT

CONTRIBUTING  
FACTORS

POLITICAL AND  
POLICY LANDSCAPE

LOOKING  
AHEAD

POLICY  
RECOMMENDATIONS

REPORT  
CARD



## CONTEXT

The high unemployment rate and stagnant minimum wage in Nova Scotia have contributed to the rise of poverty in the province. This has left a significant portion of the population struggling to meet their basic needs. A steep rise in housing costs over the past few years has exacerbated the issue. As such, 68% of food bank clients in the province live in rental housing. This rate is worst among the Atlantic provinces and points towards a larger issue with the cost of living and its impact on food insecurity. Rural residents face additional challenges because their geographic isolation makes it difficult to access services and opportunities.

## CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

Overall, Nova Scotia, like the other Atlantic provinces, is struggling because of a lack of jobs. It has not only one of the highest unemployment rates in the country but also one of the highest food insecurity and poverty rates.

As fewer people work, more rely on social assistance programs and a fragile social safety net. In Nova Scotia, **12% of the population receives EI, which is double the national average. Nearly a quarter (23%) of the population receives social assistance, which is the highest among the provinces. Additionally, 17% of the population receives housing benefits (second highest among the provinces).**

Unfortunately, the social assistance system in Nova Scotia is not equipped to properly help those in need. Social assistance rates for employable single people **do not equate to even 50% of the poverty line.** This year, **53% of the population feel financially worse off than they did last year,** and nearly two in five people who receive social support say that rates are not enough to help them keep up with the cost of living.

When looking at the high fixed costs for those living in the province, it is clear to see why individuals are struggling, regardless of whether they are working or receiving social assistance. Fixed costs for people on a low income are at their highest in Nova Scotia, where they are spending up to 66% of their income on costs beyond housing.

# NOVA SCOTIA

Meanwhile, 35% of the province's residents are spending more than 30% of their income on rent. This means that there are likely many people living in Nova Scotia who **must spend more than 100% of their incomes just to pay for the bare necessities.**

**Demographic Considerations** – Nearly 1 in 10 seniors in Nova Scotia live in poverty, the highest ratio among this age group in all of Canada. Although poverty rates for all groups have dropped in recent years, including for seniors, the poverty rate among people aged 65+ remains nearly two-thirds higher in Nova Scotia than the national average, a disparity that has actually increased on a relative basis since 2015.

Despite the small size of the province, many rural areas have little to no broadband infrastructure. Nova Scotia is in the bottom third in Canada for access to broadband: more than 15% of the province's population is still without service. Post-COVID-19 access to high-speed Internet is as much about quality of life as it is a basic economic necessity, and in some cases it enables workers to pursue jobs and economic opportunities while living in economically isolated communities.

**12%**

of Nova Scotians receive Employment Insurance – double the national average

**23%**

of Nova Scotia's population receives social assistance – highest among the provinces

**2 IN 5**

residents on social assistance are struggling to keep up with the cost of living

**NEARLY  
1 IN 10**

seniors in Nova Scotia live in poverty

## POLITICAL AND POLICY LANDSCAPE

Nova Scotia is lagging behind many other provinces on the pathway out of poverty. It has no updated poverty reduction strategy and does not have a sufficient framework to eliminate poverty and low incomes in the province.

Data from this year's survey shows that Atlantic Canada is suffering particularly badly when it comes to the housing crisis. To help address this issue, in October 2021, the government of Nova Scotia, under Premier Tim Houston, extended the existing 2% cap on rent increases until December 31, 2023.

Additionally, to reach the most affected individuals and families, the Government of Nova Scotia announced a [support package](#) in 2022 to help Nova Scotians with low incomes. Included in the deal were:

- a one-time payment of \$150 to all current income assistance recipients,
- a one-time payment of \$150 to everyone currently eligible to receive the Heating Assistance Rebate,
- \$1 million to Feed Nova Scotia to distribute among its 140 food banks province-wide, and
- \$200,000 to local food banks across the province (not affiliated with Feed Nova Scotia).

# NOVA SCOTIA

## LOOKING AHEAD

Nova Scotia's 2023–2024 budget includes investments in affordable housing and supporting people experiencing homelessness, but the initiatives are unclear and insufficient. It is disappointing to see that it did not include any increase to social assistance rates for the second year in a row, despite the soaring cost of living. There were some investments in making life more affordable for families living on low incomes but given that Nova Scotia had the highest poverty rate in Canada in 2020, the 2023 budget falls short.

Poverty is becoming an increasingly pressing issue in the province, with 61% of residents witnessing an increase in poverty where they live. Moreover, 53% of people in Nova Scotia feel that they are worse off than they were a year ago. This is a higher proportion than in any other province. Although the government has made some policy strides, it has not introduced a poverty reduction plan since 2009. To address the issue, policymakers should focus on modernizing their approach to meet the needs of today's society.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

### Accountability

#### 1. Introduce a new poverty reduction strategy, focusing in particular on poverty among seniors

Following the passage of Bill 94, Nova Scotia created its first poverty reduction strategy in 2009. Although this strategy set out a vision for reducing poverty by 2020, no new strategy has been introduced since. A new strategy is required to galvanize action to address remaining pockets of poverty, particularly among residents aged 65+. The prevalence of poverty among people over 65 years of age may be surprising to some, given Canada's relatively strong track record in addressing seniors' poverty in Canada since the introduction of the OAS/GIS. This reality check reinforces the need for a renewed poverty reduction strategy that addresses the needs of all residents.

#### 2. Improving community-based health care for seniors

As part of a renewed focus on the needs of seniors, the poverty reduction strategy should examine how primary health care services can be leveraged in conjunction with income supports to improve aging at home and access to community services for seniors living on low incomes.

Given that the costs of care are a significant drain on household financial resources later in life, and are often associated with a rise in poverty among seniors after the age of 75, the province has an opportunity to examine how it can better support both poverty reduction and health care goals simultaneously.

#### 3. Removing co-payments for provincial pharmacare programs

Further to the previous recommendation, the provincial government should waive co-payments for the seniors and family pharmacare programs. This will remove the dilemma a person may face between purchasing crucial medications and putting food on the table. This will have a notable impact, as a significant number of Nova Scotian food bank visitors are forced to spend less on food (56%) or leave prescriptions unfilled (50%) due to high prescription costs.

# NOVA SCOTIA

## Reverse Benefit and Income loss

### 4. Introduce tax indexation, indexing income brackets to inflation

Nova Scotia (along with Prince Edward Island) remains one of the only two provinces that do not index their tax brackets to inflation. Continued inaction on this front by successive governments constitutes a tax by stealth on low- and middle-income earners, a fact that has become particularly worrisome in recent years given elevated levels of inflation. Indexation should be introduced as a priority in the next provincial budget and extended to all provincial programs, for both revenue collection and credits and income supports.

### 5. Increase and amend the Poverty Reduction Credit

The Poverty Reduction Credit is a unique income support instrument in Canada in that, unlike most government programs at both the federal and provincial levels, it is specifically designed for people who have low incomes and do not have dependent children. This is a group most often forgotten in policy design, as governments tend to focus strongly on families. Although the credit has been periodically increased since it was first introduced in 2010, it has not been enhanced from its current level of \$500 per year (delivered quarterly in payments of \$125) with a cut-off at \$16,000 in income per year. We recommend the province double the credit and index it to inflation going forward so that it continues to retain its purchasing power over time. A subsequent expansion of the credit to cover residents above the current cut-off of \$16,000/year should be a priority focus of the province's new poverty reduction strategy.

### 6. Reduce the claw-backs of the Nova Scotia Affordable Living Tax Credit (NSALTC)

The NSALTC currently provides a flat benefit of \$255 for households, plus \$60 per child, and is progressively clawed back on incomes above \$30,000. Like the federal GST tax credit, the NSALTC has been implemented to help mitigate the costs associated with sales tax for the lowest earners. Given that the GST credit has already been increased three times federally since 2020 to help address affordability concerns during a period of high inflation, the province has an opportunity to reorient the NSALTC into a rental assistance benefit. In doing so, it would retarget the benefit specifically to renters, while expanding both the benefit amount and the earnings cut-off to support households with earnings slightly above the current threshold of \$30,000 per year. This would provide potentially more meaningful and better targeted assistance with what is clearly one of the most pressing affordability challenges for residents on low incomes.

## Infrastructure that Works for People

### 7. Expand broadband infrastructure

Nova Scotia should set the goal of closing the gap between itself and Quebec in terms of broadband coverage and access, with the goal of reaching 95% coverage within the next three years. This will require a combination of direct investment and tax-related support for telecom networks and distributors to make capital projects more affordable, along with a combination of regulatory changes to prioritize access for towers and wire in municipal and utility infrastructure corridors.





# NOVA SCOTIA: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 1 GRADE: EXPERIENCE OF POVERTY

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE	METHODOLOGY
People Feeling Worse off Compared to Last Year	52.5%	F	This grade is based on the percentage of respondents who indicated they are financially worse-off compared to one year prior. The grade was given a weight of 25/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
People Paying More than 30% of Income on Housing	35.3%	D	This grade is based on the percentage of respondents who indicated they are spending 30% or more of their income on housing. The grade was given a weight of 20/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
People Having Trouble Accessing Healthcare	8.8%	B-	This grade is based on the percentage of respondents who indicated they 'somewhat disagree' or 'strongly disagree' with the statement 'I can access and receive healthcare anytime I need to' AND stated the reason was due to one or more of the following reasons: 'I can't take time off work'; 'I don't have healthcare coverage'; 'I don't have money for medication'. The grade was given a weight of 10/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Government Support Recipients Who Say Rates are Insufficient to Keep up with Cost of Living	38.5%	C-	This grade is based on the percentage of individuals who indicated that they 'personally receive some form of social security benefit or support' AND indicated that 'social assistance rates aren't high enough to help me keep up with the cost of living'. The grade was given a weight of 25/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Percent of Income Spent on Fixed Costs beyond Housing	65.6%	F	This grade is based on the combination of results from several questions asking the average amount individuals spend on fixed costs like internet, transport, groceries, and utilities. The average amounts spent were converted into a portion of income for those earning \$75,000 a year or less (given in a range from lowest to highest). This number is the higher end of the range provided. The grade was given a weight of 20/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).

### SECTION 1: CONTEXT

Nova Scotia received a D grade in this section. This is the lowest grade received in the Experience of Poverty section, shared with Saskatchewan.

Nova Scotia is one of just three provinces in the country to receive multiple failing grades in this section. With nearly 53% of people reporting feeling Worse off Compared to Last Year, there are more people struggling in Nova Scotia than not, earning the province its first F.

Its other failing grade was for the Fixed Cost Beyond Housing indicator. People are spending as much as 66% of their income on necessary expenses beyond housing costs.

One small bright spot is the Accessibility of Health Care indicator, where the province received the highest grade of all the provinces. This grade comes despite many recent accounts identifying Nova Scotia's healthcare system as being in crisis.

If Nova Scotia is to improve its grade in this section, the provincial government will need to take significant steps to reduce the burden of housing and everyday costs of living on residents. This will likely also help improve the number of people feeling worse off.





# NOVA SCOTIA: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 2 GRADE: **POVERTY MEASURES**

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE	METHODOLOGY
Poverty Rate (MBM)	8.6%	F	The poverty rate (MBM) is based on data from the Statistics Canada 2021 Canadian Income Survey <a href="#">table</a> showing poverty and low income statistics by selected demographic characteristics. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 25/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Social Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line (Singles)	34%	F	This grade is based on the maximum annual social assistance rate (provincial only) for a single unattached individual considered employable compared to the official poverty line of the provincial capital (the Market Basket Measure). The data is from <a href="#">Welfare in Canada 2022</a> , available on Maytree's website. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 15/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Disability Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line	47%	F	This grade is based on the maximum annual social assistance rate (provincial only) for a single unattached individual with a disability compared to the official poverty line of the provincial capital (the Market Basket Measure). The data is from <a href="#">Welfare in Canada 2022</a> , available on Maytree's website. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 15/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Unemployment Rate	5.7%	D	This grade is based on Statistics Canada's <a href="#">Labour force characteristics by province</a> , monthly adjusted. This data is from March 2023. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 15/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Food Insecurity Rate	22.0%	F	This grade is based on the combination of Marginal, Moderate, and Severe food insecurity rates for all persons in 2022 from the Statistics Canada's <a href="#">Canadian Income Survey (CIS)</a> (2021). The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 30/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).

## SECTION 2: **CONTEXT**

Nova Scotia received an F in this section, tied with Alberta for the lowest grade among all provinces in the Poverty Measures section.

It received a failing grade in four of the five indicators in this section.

While the Maritime provinces are all struggling to some degree in this section, Nova Scotia residents experience the greatest challenges. One area where the Maritimes sees persistent issues is with food insecurity rates. All the Maritime provinces received failing grades for food insecurity.

Nova Scotia is in need of significant policy action to boost the performance of indicators in this section.



# NOVA SCOTIA: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 3 GRADE: MATERIAL DEPRIVATION

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE	METHODOLOGY
Severely Inadequate Standard of Living	17.8%	F	This grade is based on the % of individuals who were unable to afford 5 or more items from a list of items considered necessary for an adequate standard of living. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 60/100. Grades were determined using a grading scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Inadequate Standard of Living	32.8%	F	This grade is based on the % of individuals who were unable to afford 2 or more items from a list of items considered necessary for an adequate standard of living. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 40/100. Grades were determined using a grading scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).

### SECTION 3: CONTEXT

**\*A material deprivation index (MDI) is a measure that assesses the extent to which individuals lack access to a list of basic needs. Someone who can afford all items on this list would be living an adequate standard of living. This index allows us to gauge a person’s level of economic well-being without looking at income.**

Compared to other provinces, Nova Scotia has a well-below average standard of living according to the Material Deprivation Index. The province received a failing grade for this section. Overall, Nova Scotia has the lowest score in this section and shared the only F grade with New Brunswick.

Nova Scotia has the highest rate of people living in an inadequate standard of living, as one in three residents in the province are missing two or more items that are considered necessary for a decent standard of living. Additionally, roughly 18% of people have a severely inadequate standard of living.

Across the country, the most common items that people are unable to afford are the ability to:

- Pay for an unexpected expense of \$500 from their own resources.
- Repair or replace broken or damaged furniture.
- Repair or replace broken or damaged electronic goods (ie. refrigerator, washing machine, laptop).
- Spend a small amount of money on themselves each week.



# NOVA SCOTIA: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 4 GRADE: **LEGISLATIVE PROGRESS**

INDICATOR TITLE

GRADE

Legislative Progress



### SECTION 4: **CONTEXT**

Nova Scotia has a high poverty rate and residents face significant affordability difficulties. The province has taken minimal steps in 2023 to address these issues.

Notable developments include:

- [Increasing the minimum wage](#) twice this year, from \$13.60/hour to \$15/hour by October 1.
- Extending the 2% [rent cap](#) until the end of 2023, when it will be set at 5%.
- [Increasing the Nova Scotia Child Benefit](#) for low-income families.
- Creating up to [3,200 more paid internship opportunities](#) for post-secondary students and others studying in Nova Scotia, representing \$13 million in additional funding over the next four years.
- Increasing access to a [range of holistic and community-based mental health](#) and [addiction services](#), with over \$10 million in funding.

Housing access and affordability remain a persistent challenge for many. To support renters, the province will set a 5% rent cap in 2024, but 5% rent increases coming into place in 2024 are still too high for many households with low incomes. The government must develop stronger protections for renters who are already struggling to keep up with the current cost of rent. While several housing announcements have been made this year, only a handful of the changes are dedicated to affordable housing. As the province needs more than 30,000 affordable units, the construction of a couple hundred units per year is not going to meet the need of struggling residents.

The province is making some gains in its efforts to address rural and racial inequalities. Initiatives include investing \$10.6 million to expand high speed Internet access to rural and remote communities and supporting the development of a new Mi'kmaq Native Friendship Centre, to provide essential housing, schooling, and employment services for the urban Indigenous community. However, the former announcement relies heavily on Federal Government funding.

Considering Nova Scotia's low grades throughout the report card, much more should be happening to combat poverty. While the steps taken this year will help somewhat, much more needs to be done to strengthen the social safety net – particularly for workers and seniors – and build housing that meets the needs and incomes of residents.

For the above reasons, Nova Scotia received an F for this section. The government has failed to take substantive steps this year to meaningfully address poverty. Lack of legislative action on affordable housing and towards improving social assistance will likely result in worsening financial conditions for residents in the province if the trend continues.

Food Banks  
Canada



Banques alimentaires  
Canada



2023  
POVERTY REPORT CARD ANALYSIS

# NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR



# NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR: AT A GLANCE



## SECTION 1 GRADE: EXPERIENCE OF POVERTY

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
People Feeling Worse off Compared to Last Year	42.6%	C-
People Paying More than 30% of Income on Housing	30.9%	B-
People Having Trouble Accessing Healthcare	14.0%	C-
Government Support Recipients Who Say Rates are Insufficient to Keep up with Cost of Living	55.1%	F
Percent of Income Spent on Fixed Costs beyond Housing	63.9%	F



## SECTION 2 GRADE: POVERTY MEASURES

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
Poverty Rate (MBM)	8.1%	D-
Social Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line (Singles)	46%	D
Disability Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line	77%	B
Unemployment Rate	10.3%	F
Food Insecurity Rate	22.5%	F



## SECTION 3 GRADE: MATERIAL DEPRIVATION

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
Severely Inadequate Standard of Living	11.3%	D+
Inadequate Standard of Living	31.2%	F



## SECTION 4 GRADE: LEGISLATIVE PROGRESS

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
Legislative Progress	N/A	F

# NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

CONTEXT

CONTRIBUTING  
FACTORS

POLITICAL AND  
POLICY LANDSCAPE

LOOKING  
AHEAD

POLICY  
RECOMMENDATIONS

REPORT  
CARD



## CONTEXT

Newfoundland and Labrador has undergone significant economic and demographic shifts in the past few decades, marked by the decline of traditional industries such as fishing and mining, and the outmigration of young people seeking job opportunities elsewhere. These changes, among others, have led to an above-average poverty rate in the province. Particularly concerning are the poverty rates in rural areas and among Indigenous peoples. Over half of Inuit children in Newfoundland and Labrador live below the poverty line, according to a 2019 report by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

## CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

Inadequate and overcrowded housing is a pressing concern for many households in Newfoundland and Labrador that are living on low incomes, and it is aggravated by the high cost of living in remote areas. As a result, a significant portion of residents in the province continue to grapple with poverty and an inadequate social safety net. Furthermore, declines in traditional industries and outmigration have hurt the province's economy and contributed to an increase in poverty.

Newfoundland and Labrador captures the true challenges of Canadian poverty. With unacceptable working and economic conditions, people in the province are struggling to make ends meet. With that, many are forced to turn to social assistance and Employment Insurance (EI), but because rates are inadequate, they continue to struggle to get food on the table and pay rent.

**Working in a Struggling Economy** – When it comes to work, **18% of Newfoundlanders are receiving EI payments compared to only 6% nationally.** Low wages are affecting 2 in 5 people's ability to make ends meet. **More people are reporting that it is difficult to access stable employment opportunities in Newfoundland than anywhere else in Canada,** which is resulting in the country's worst unemployment rate of 10%.



# NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

As such, 54% of residents stated that they wanted to see an increase in the minimum wage, 42% want policies that promote decent work, and 47% want new opportunities in the job market along with training opportunities.

**Cost of Living Skyrockets** – As the challenges with work persist, the cost of living will continue to be a real problem for the 46% of people in Newfoundland who struggle to access fresh and affordable food. The proportion of income that households in Newfoundland with low incomes are paying toward fixed costs for things like utilities and transport is one of the highest in Canada. This explains why 2 in 3 residents are asking for a reduction in the cost of utilities.

**A Failing Social Assistance System** – In the meantime, more and more people may need to rely on a broken social assistance system. In Newfoundland, 1 in 5 people are already receiving social assistance from the province, and 37% of those people say that the rates are not high enough to keep up with the cost of living. The evidence backs this up, as social assistance rates in the province provide amounts equal to less than half of the poverty line (for single working-age adults).

18%

of Newfoundlanders receive Employment Insurance compared to only 6% nationally

2 IN 5

residents say low wages are affecting their ability to make ends meet

46%

of Newfoundlanders struggle to access fresh and affordable food

1 IN 5

residents are already receiving social assistance from the province

## POLITICAL AND POLICY LANDSCAPE

Newfoundland and Labrador's 2006 poverty reduction strategy was an early success story, as it supported focused efforts to reduce the proportion of residents on social assistance and provided a way to think about necessary government actions long before other provinces were active in this area. However, momentum has since been lost and no similar strategy has subsequently been implemented. Almost two decades on, there is little framework in place to support the elimination of poverty in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The current government of Newfoundland has chosen to tackle the cost of living crisis. In 2022, it announced an [investment of \\$22.2 million in five key areas, four of which were directed to the cost of living:](#)

1. Increasing the Income Supplement by 10% – providing up to a total of \$1,000 per year for a family of four and up to \$715 per year for individuals with disabilities.
2. Increasing the Seniors Benefit by 10% – with eligible families receiving up to \$1,444 annually.
3. Creating a one-time benefit for people currently receiving income support – \$200 for individuals and \$400 for families.
4. Providing an additional \$2 million to transition homes from oil heating to electric – providing a rebate of up to \$5,000.



# NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

## LOOKING AHEAD

Newfoundland and Labrador's 2023 budget is a bare-bones budget that does little to address unaffordability and support individuals and families experiencing poverty. It includes a meagre investment of \$140 million for new and affordable housing. Lumping together funding for these two categories of housing in this manner also makes it unclear how much will be allocated to affordable housing and misses the mark on providing effective and reliable assistance to people struggling with the rising cost of living. There were some other minor initiatives to support vulnerable people, such as a 5% increase to the NL Income Supplement and NL Senior's Benefit, and \$19.2 million for settlement supports, including support for Ukrainians.

As the province looks to reduce poverty by 50% by 2030, it will need to tackle the cost of living and lack of affordable housing. Experts in the field believe mirroring PEI's approach, with all three official political parties signing a letter of recommendation for a universal basic income, would help in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The government must take drastic measures. The cost of living nationally continues to rise and housing is becoming less attainable for those looking to buy or rent. Poverty rates in Newfoundland remain high, with rural communities and Indigenous peoples disproportionately affected. While the government has taken some steps to combat the crisis, there is still much work to be done. The government must make a concerted effort to tackle housing affordability and the general high cost of living so that all residents – and especially key groups of people with particular needs – experience meaningful change.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

### Accountability

#### 1. Introduce a new poverty reduction strategy

As the provincial energy sector continues to recover and grow, now is the time to develop a new poverty reduction strategy. It is critical that Newfoundland and Labrador chart a plan that will ensure an equitable and inclusive future for the province that reduces inequality and poverty.

#### 2. Focus on reducing child poverty

As part of this strategy, the province should prioritize the near-term objective of reducing child poverty rates in Newfoundland and Labrador to at least match the national average. Approximately 1 in 10 children in the province live in households that experience poverty. This is the highest rate in Canada. Although lower than in 2015, much of this reduction occurred during COVID-19 and was just over half the reduction experienced nationally. Prior to COVID-19, child poverty in the province had effectively remained stable over the prior four years (2015–2018) despite the introduction of the CCB.

### Inflation Protection

#### 3. Implement widespread indexation of benefits and brackets

Newfoundland and Labrador has previously recognized indexation as an important aspect of providing adequate support to help people in households with low incomes, as evidenced by its inclusion in the 2006 poverty reduction strategy.

# NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

While the Newfoundland and Labrador Child Benefit (NLCB) continues to be indexed, other benefit indexing was ended in 2012. Ensuring that all benefits and brackets are comprehensively indexed so that residents can count on the government to keep up with the changing affordability context is a critical success factor in poverty avoidance and reduction. Given that Newfoundland and Labrador is now projecting budget surpluses from 2024–25 to 2027–28, there is no reason for the province to delay any further.

## Work and Opportunity

### 4. Work with the federal government to pilot new employment initiatives targeting youth and the long-term unemployed

While the province's economic outlook has improved in recent years as global commodity prices have rebounded, Newfoundland and Labrador continues to experience the highest percentage in the country of young people who are neither in work nor education or training (NEET), and the highest percentage of workers experiencing long-term unemployment (27 weeks or longer), which is also particularly concentrated among younger cohorts. There are several steps the province can take to address this, including:

- improving the affordability of and access to post-secondary training and apprenticeships, and
- investing in several job development programs with employers to build training, demonstration, and work-integrated learning opportunities for aspiring and young graduates.

However, given the scale and enduring nature of the challenge to the province's future, the federal government will need to be a partner. In particular, a partnership of this nature would allow the federal government to leverage its tools for investing in a variety of EI-related pilot projects that could be scaled up, including efforts to help workers facing long-term unemployment with greater ease in job re-entry.

### 5. Reduce claw-backs on employment income

The current Moving into the Workforce program provides little incentive for labour force engagement and has a sizable claw-back on its benefits. For example, a single person can access an earnings exemption only on the first \$75/month plus 20% of their earnings balance. This is the lowest earnings exemption in Canada. In tandem with similar changes made in recent years in other provinces, this initial exemption should be raised to a minimum of \$500 and then total earnings phased out in a progressive manner so that recipients keep at least 50 cents per dollar earned.

## Broadband Infrastructure

### 6. Expand broadband infrastructure

Newfoundland and Labrador has the lowest rate of access for broadband Internet: 77%. Post-COVID 19, access to high-speed Internet is as much about quality of life as it is a basic economic necessity, and in some cases it enables workers to pursue jobs and economic opportunities while living in lower-cost communities.

The province should augment recent federal investments in universal broadband with its own accelerated provincial initiative. It should dedicate up to one-quarter of future surpluses to broadband investment, with the goal of reaching 90% penetration as quickly as possible.



# NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 1 GRADE: EXPERIENCE OF POVERTY

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE	METHODOLOGY
People Feeling Worse off Compared to Last Year	42.6%	C-	This grade is based on the percentage of respondents who indicated they are financially worse-off compared to one year prior. The grade was given a weight of 25/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
People Paying More than 30% of Income on Housing	30.9%	B-	This grade is based on the percentage of respondents who indicated they are spending 30% or more of their income on housing. The grade was given a weight of 20/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
People Having Trouble Accessing Healthcare	14.0%	C-	This grade is based on the percentage of respondents who indicated they 'somewhat disagree' or 'strongly disagree' with the statement 'I can access and receive healthcare anytime I need to' AND stated the reason was due to one or more of the following reasons: 'I can't take time off work'; 'I don't have healthcare coverage'; 'I don't have money for medication'. The grade was given a weight of 10/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Government Support Recipients Who Say Rates are Insufficient to Keep up with Cost of Living	55.1%	F	This grade is based on the percentage of individuals who indicated that they 'personally receive some form of social security benefit or support' AND indicated that 'social assistance rates aren't high enough to help me keep up with the cost of living'. The grade was given a weight of 25/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Percent of Income Spent on Fixed Costs beyond Housing	63.9%	F	This grade is based on the combination of results from several questions asking the average amount individuals spend on fixed costs like internet, transport, groceries, and utilities. The average amounts spent were converted into a portion of income for those earning \$75,000 a year or less (given in a range from lowest to highest). This number is the higher end of the range provided. The grade was given a weight of 20/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).

### SECTION 1: CONTEXT

Newfoundland and Labrador received an overall grade of D+ in this section. Despite performing relatively well compared to other provinces on several indicators, Newfoundland and Labrador's overall grade took a significant hit from its failing grades for Sufficiency of Government Support and the Fixed Cost Beyond Housing indicators.

However, housing is a comparably bright spot. Newfoundland received a B- on the *People Spending more than 30% of Income on Housing* indicator. This is the second-highest grade among the provinces, but it is important to note that nearly one in three people experience core housing need.

Unfortunately, despite fewer people spending more than 30% of income on housing, many are spending a significant proportion of their income on other fixed costs, which could effectively cancel-out the benefits of lower housing costs.

Overall, for this section, Newfoundland and Labrador finds itself right around the average for the country. Its failing grades in the Fixed Costs beyond Housing and Sufficiency of Government Support indicators are a massive concern, and one it shares with fellow Maritimes province Nova Scotia. When you take into account housing and high fixed costs, many residents have little left over after paying for essentials.



# NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 2 GRADE: POVERTY MEASURES

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE	METHODOLOGY
Poverty Rate (MBM)	8.1%	D-	The poverty rate (MBM) is based on data from the Statistics Canada 2021 Canadian Income Survey <a href="#">table</a> showing poverty and low income statistics by selected demographic characteristics. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 25/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Social Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line (Singles)	46%	D	This grade is based on the maximum annual social assistance rate (provincial only) for a single unattached individual considered employable compared to the official poverty line of the provincial capital (the Market Basket Measure). The data is from <a href="#">Welfare in Canada 2022</a> , available on Maytree's website. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 15/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Disability Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line	77%	B	This grade is based on the maximum annual social assistance rate (provincial only) for a single unattached individual with a disability compared to the official poverty line of the provincial capital (the Market Basket Measure). The data is from <a href="#">Welfare in Canada 2022</a> , available on Maytree's website. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 15/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Unemployment Rate	10.3%	F	This grade is based on Statistics Canada's <a href="#">Labour force characteristics by province</a> , monthly adjusted. This data is from March 2023. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 15/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Food Insecurity Rate	22.5%	F	This grade is based on the combination of Marginal, Moderate, and Severe food insecurity rates for all persons in 2022 from the Statistics Canada's <a href="#">Canadian Income Survey (CIS)</a> (2021). The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 30/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).

## SECTION 2: CONTEXT

Newfoundland and Labrador received an overall grade of a D- in this indicator.

A key contributor to this grade was an F in the *Unemployment Rate* and *Food Insecurity Rate* indicators.

Newfoundland and Labrador has the highest unemployment rate of any province. While this is linked closely to the nature of seasonal work in the province, Newfoundland also has the highest rate of long-term unemployment in Canada and there are actions that the province can take to reduce these rates and help those who are unemployed to get by.

Taking action in this area, along with improving social assistance rates will go a long way to increase the grade Newfoundland and Labrador received in this section.



# NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 3 GRADE: MATERIAL DEPRIVATION

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE	METHODOLOGY
Severely Inadequate Standard of Living	11.3%		This grade is based on the % of individuals who were unable to afford 5 or more items from a list of items considered necessary for an adequate standard of living. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 60/100. Grades were determined using a grading scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Inadequate Standard of Living	31.2%		This grade is based on the % of individuals who were unable to afford 2 or more items from a list of items considered necessary for an adequate standard of living. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 40/100. Grades were determined using a grading scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).

### SECTION 3: CONTEXT

**\*A material deprivation index (MDI) is a measure that assesses the extent to which individuals lack access to a list of basic needs. Someone who can afford all items on this list would be living an adequate standard of living. This index allows us to gauge a person's level of economic well-being without looking at income.**

Compared to other provinces, Newfoundland and Labrador has a slightly below-average standard of living according to the Material Deprivation Index. It received a D- for this section.

Compared to the other Maritime provinces, Newfoundland and Labrador is somewhere in the middle. Material deprivation is highest in the country in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick - which both received failing grades - and is at its lowest in PEI, which received an A-

Unfortunately, nearly one-third of the residents in the province are missing two or more indicators that are considered necessary for a decent standard of living.

Across the country, the most common items that people are unable to afford are the ability to:

- Pay for an unexpected expense of \$500 from their own resources.
- Repair or replace broken or damaged furniture.
- Repair or replace broken or damaged electronic goods (ie. refrigerator, washing machine, laptop).
- Spend a small amount of money on themselves each week.



# NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 4 GRADE: LEGISLATIVE PROGRESS

INDICATOR TITLE

GRADE

Legislative Progress



### SECTION 4: CONTEXT

High unemployment, narrow career opportunities and low wages, combined with rising fixed costs makes poverty a stubborn and difficult challenge in Newfoundland and Labrador. This year, the province has taken little action to help address these root problems to support residents.

Notable developments include:

- [Increasing the minimum wage](#) twice in 2023 raising it from \$13.70/hour to \$15.00/hour.
- Achieving [\\$10-a-day childcare](#).
- Investing in the creation of [10 new Family Care Teams](#) with the aim of providing access to primary care for up to 80,000 people.
- Introducing new employment support including:
  - expanding the [Office for Indigenous and Northern Skilled Trades](#) to better serve more Indigenous Peoples;
  - introducing the [Employment Support Stability Pilot Project](#) which will provide improved supports for participants receiving Income Support, and;
  - opening applications for the [Job Creations Partnership Program](#) to improve access to work experience and fair wages.
- Investing in [high speed internet](#) access for more than 350 rural, remote, and Indigenous communities.

While several of these changes are positive steps, the government continues to make changes that are too modest to lead to significant change. It did announce a plan to build 800 affordable homes over the next three years, but this is still far too slow to keep up with the amount of need. Additionally, many of these changes are the largely built on Federal Government funding.

Newfoundland and Labrador face a complex poverty landscape and this year it has not demonstrated an understanding of the significance of these issues. Its policy actions must reflect the gravity of the situation for the province’s grade to see an increase.

For the above reasons, Newfoundland and Labrador received an F for this section. The government has failed to take substantive steps this year to meaningfully address poverty. Lack of legislative action on housing and toward improving social assistance will likely result in worsening financial conditions for residents in the province.



A stylized map of Canada is shown in shades of gray. A dark gray callout box is positioned over the northern part of the country, containing the letters 'INC' in white. Below the callout box, two yellow icons of a spoon and a fork are placed between the text 'Food Banks Canada' and 'Banques alimentaires Canada'.

**INC**

Food Banks  
Canada



Banques alimentaires  
Canada

# 2023

**POVERTY REPORT CARD ANALYSIS**

**NORTHERN CANADA**





# YUKON: AT A GLANCE



## SECTION 1 GRADE: EXPERIENCE OF POVERTY

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
People Feeling Worse off Compared to Last Year	31.3%	A
People Paying More than 30% of Income on Housing	53.0%	F
People Having Trouble Accessing Healthcare	9.1%	B-
Government Support Recipients Who Say Rates are Insufficient to Keep up with Cost of Living	31.8%	C+
Percent of Income Spent on Fixed Costs beyond Housing	48.8%	A+



## SECTION 2 GRADE: POVERTY MEASURES

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
Poverty Rate (MBM)	8.8%	F
Social Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line (Singles)	66%	C+
Disability Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line	78%	B
Unemployment Rate	2.9%	B
Food Insecurity Rate	21.2%	D-



## SECTION GRADE: LEGISLATIVE PROGRESS

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
Legislative Progress	N/A	C



# NORTHWEST TERRITORIES: AT A GLANCE



## SECTION 1 GRADE: EXPERIENCE OF POVERTY

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
People Feeling Worse off Compared to Last Year	31.3%	A
People Paying More than 30% of Income on Housing	53.0%	F
People Having Trouble Accessing Healthcare	9.1%	B-
Government Support Recipients Who Say Rates are Insufficient to Keep up with Cost of Living	31.8%	C+
Percent of Income Spent on Fixed Costs beyond Housing	48.8%	A+



## SECTION 2 GRADE: POVERTY MEASURES

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
Poverty Rate (MBM)	10.2%	F
Social Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line (Singles)	112%	A+
Disability Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line	93%	A+
Unemployment Rate	5.2%	D+
Food Insecurity Rate	20.4%	D



## SECTION GRADE: LEGISLATIVE PROGRESS

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
Legislative Progress	N/A	B



# NUNAVUT: AT A GLANCE



## SECTION 1 GRADE: EXPERIENCE OF POVERTY

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
People Feeling Worse off Compared to Last Year	31.3%	A+
People Paying More than 30% of Income on Housing	53.0%	F
People Having Trouble Accessing Healthcare	9.1%	B-
Government Support Recipients Who Say Rates are Insufficient to Keep up with Cost of Living	31.8%	C+
Percent of Income Spent on Fixed Costs beyond Housing	48.8%	A+



## SECTION 2 GRADE: POVERTY MEASURES

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
Poverty Rate (MBM)	21.3%	F
Social Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line (Singles)	N/A	N/A
Disability Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line	N/A	N/A
Unemployment Rate	12.1%	F
Food Insecurity Rate	49.5%	F



## SECTION GRADE: LEGISLATIVE PROGRESS

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE
Legislative Progress	N/A	C

# NORTHERN CANADA

CONTEXT

CONTRIBUTING  
FACTORS

POLITICAL AND  
POLICY LANDSCAPE

POLICY  
RECOMMENDATIONS

REPORT CARDS  
YUKON | NWT | NUNAVUT



## CONTEXT

Across Northern Canada, territorial governments provide basic social assistance services that reflect the high costs of living in the Canadian territories. The economies of Nunavut, Yukon, and the Northwest Territories depend heavily on transfers from the Government of Canada. In Nunavut, these transfers represent roughly 90% of the territory’s total budget. The levels of basic social assistance vary significantly from territory to territory. The basic amount in 2020 was highest in the Northwest Territories (\$26,211 for a single adult considered employable) and lowest in Nunavut (\$9,228 for a single adult considered employable). In every case, this basic assistance in the territories is boosted by various federal and provincial benefits and additional social assistance payments. People in the territories who receive social assistance also receive federal tax credits and—in the case of Yukon and the Northwest Territories – territorial tax credits.

**Food Insecurity** – The high price of food and insufficient access (in particular, to fresh nourishing food) has resulted in massive food insecurity across Northern Canada. The cost to feed a family in the territories far exceeds that of any of the provinces in southern Canada because of the costs of shipping, refrigeration, and other inputs that have only worsened with recent inflation.

Indigenous peoples in the North are acutely impacted by food insecurity. In 2012, the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food [reported](#) that Nunavut’s Inuit population had “the highest documented food insecurity rate for any Aboriginal population in a developed country.” The same report noted that the rate of food insecurity for Inuit adults was six times higher than the national average. Since 2020, the federal government has invested over \$1.1 million to improve food insecurity in Nunavut, with organizations including Food Banks Canada acting as partners to distribute this funding.

# NORTHERN CANADA

## CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

**Food in the North** – Food insecurity is a major concern across Northern Canada. Rates of food insecurity are well above the national figure of 18%: Yukon, 21%; the Northwest Territories, 20%; and Nunavut, 50%. Our 2023 survey revealed that 40% of people in the North struggle to access fresh and affordable food. Unfortunately, the limitations of data collection may mean that the true figures are much higher.

It is well known that the cost of food in the northern and remote parts of Canada are vastly different than in the rest of the country, where a family can spend roughly \$400–\$500 a week on food.

**Unaffordable and Inadequate Housing** – Housing costs are also a major concern, although situations differ across the region. **Over half of the survey respondents indicated that they are spending more than 30% of their income on rent.** With residents on low incomes responding that they spend an average of **50% of their income on other fixed costs**, we gather that most Northern residents spend close to or more than 100% of their income on meeting their basic needs.

**The Challenges of Finding Work** – In addition, the lack of economic diversity and reliance on resource extraction industries like mining and oil and gas contribute to limited employment opportunities in the North. Unemployment in Nunavut, for example, is 12%.

The North also has higher rates of substance abuse and mental health issues than the national average, which can lead to poverty as people struggle to maintain their employment and relationships. In fact, **almost half of the respondents in the territories indicated that their mental health was impacting their ability to find work, work effectively, or maintain their finances.**

**21%**

of residents of the Yukon are facing food insecurity

**20%**

of residents of the Northwest Territories are facing food insecurity

**50%**

of residents of Nunavut are facing food insecurity

**12.1%**

rate of unemployment in Nunavut (2.9% in the Yukon, 5.2% in NWT)

**Last-Resort Systems Still Not Enough** – As more people in the North struggle, more are forced to rely on social supports. **The proportion of EI recipients is 20% higher than the national average**, and overall, at least 30% of the population in the North is receiving some kind of social support (12% higher than the national average). Unfortunately, as in much of the rest of the country, social assistance rates are not high enough to make a real difference. **Nearly 2 in 5 recipients state that support amounts are not high enough to keep up with the cost of living.** Many residents also struggle to navigate the tax system, which means there is likely a smaller uptake of much-needed benefits.

# NORTHERN CANADA

## POLITICAL AND POLICY LANDSCAPE

Every government in the North has introduced a formal poverty reduction plan, with updates due in the coming years. Governments have prioritized tackling food insecurity, housing, and the high cost of living through various pieces of legislation and budgetary items. Legislation and policy plans introduced by each territory over the last few years are listed below:

### Yukon:

- [Better Yukon for All: Government of Yukon's Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Strategy \(2012\)](#)
  - The Government of Yukon introduced a poverty reduction strategy that builds on the findings from various consultations and studies.
- [Food Security in Yukon: A Snapshot](#)
  - In November 2020, this report was released by the Yukon Energy Food Security Network. It was intended to capture perspectives on food security in Yukon and its impact on community members.
  - In addition to long-term structural issues related to housing or transportation, the report highlights the unique challenges to Northern food security brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Northwest Territories:

- [Working Together II: An Action Plan to Reduce Poverty in the Northwest Territories \(2019\)](#)
  - Following on the 2015 plan, the Government of the Northwest Territories updated its poverty reduction plan in 2019.
- [NWT Housing Action Plan \(2020\)](#)
  - In March 2020, the Government of the Northwest Territories released a three-year plan to address housing accessibility and adequacy.
    - The plan pledged:
      - \$2.3 million toward maintaining/increasing social housing supply (224 units),
      - \$14.5 million toward repairing and replacing existing social housing stock (168 units), and
      - \$8.2 million toward supporting homeownership repair programs (162 units).

### Nunavut:

- [Collaboration for Poverty Reduction Act \(2013\)](#)
  - In May 2013, the Government of Nunavut passed legislation mandating partnerships with Inuit, non-profit, government, and business organizations on the Nunavut Roundtable for Poverty Reduction.
  - The act essentially legislates the implementation of the Makimaniq Plan and the five-year poverty reduction action plan.
- [The Makimaniq Plan 2: A Shared Approach to Poverty Reduction \(2017\)](#)
  - Building on the foundation of the original plan laid out in 2011, this plan introduces the work of the Nunavut Roundtable for Poverty Reduction and lays out the eight long-term objectives of the territory's poverty reduction work.
  - The document also includes a data collection plan and proposed indicators of progress to measure the plan's impact.

# NORTHERN CANADA

**Colonialism and Systemic Discrimination** – Canadian colonialism and systemic discrimination have played significant roles in perpetuating poverty in the territories. The history of colonialism in Canada involved the displacement, marginalization, and cultural assimilation of Indigenous peoples, leading to the erosion of their traditional ways of life and economic systems. This disruption has resulted in limited access to resources, land, and opportunities for Indigenous communities in the territories.

Moreover, systemic discrimination in areas such as education, health care, employment, and infrastructure development has further deepened the socio-economic disparities. Discriminatory policies, such as the Indian Act, have restricted Indigenous self-governance and economic autonomy, hindering the ability of Indigenous peoples to address poverty effectively.

The remote and isolated nature of many Northern communities exacerbates the challenges, with limited access to essential services and high costs of living. Addressing poverty in the territories requires acknowledging and rectifying the historical injustices and systemic barriers that continue to hinder Indigenous communities' socio-economic progress.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS – YUKON

### Strategy and Accountability

#### 1. Seizing Yukon's strategic opportunity

This year Yukon is projected to realize a budget surplus of nearly \$50 million, further enhancing the territory's long-standing accumulated surplus position. While the relative size of surpluses has come down over time, the 2023–24 surplus alone would be sufficient to almost double the budget of the Yukon Housing Corporation. Given the significant infrastructure needs of a number of communities, combined with long-term challenges relating to food insecurity and poverty, the territory should be more strategic in allocating these resources toward a long-term plan for equitable growth. To guide future decisions, it should consider developing a policy that would dedicate any future surpluses, after accounting for contingency and a modest amount of debt reduction, to a Generations Fund. This in turn would be dedicated to providing a consistent and growing source of revenue for investment in a variety of equitable growth policies, including the construction of affordable housing, the build-out of territorially sponsored broadband infrastructure, and the enhancement of poverty reduction policies, including investments in employment and training opportunities, and potential long-term enrichment of income support.

#### 2. Vision to address critical infrastructure gaps in housing, food production, and broadband

Building on the recommendation for a Generations Fund, the territorial government should make it a top priority to develop a long-term capital plan with the goal of reducing gaps between northern and southern communities in three key areas over the next five and 10 years: housing, broadband, and local food production. This should be viewed as a combined capital plan that is jointly funded with both territorial and federal sources of funding.



# NORTHERN CANADA

## Cost of Living

### 3. Index the Yukon Supplementary Allowance for social assistance recipients with disabilities

While most aspects of social assistance are indexed—a fact that sets Yukon apart from many other jurisdictions in Canada – one critical exception is the Yukon Supplementary Allowance for people with disabilities who receive social assistance. As federal enhancements to the GST credit will likely end later this year, Yukon should begin indexing the Supplementary Allowance and providing an additional \$50/month in recognition of the recent surge in food and shelter prices and the likelihood that inflation is likely to remain elevated in northern Canada for the foreseeable future.

## Affordable Housing

### 4. Adopt meaningful rent control

The broad introduction of the Canada-Yukon Housing Benefit rent supplement program offers an opportunity for the territory to take further steps to protect renters. We recommend the territory consider implementing a rent control guideline policy, similar to those in Ontario and other provinces, that sets an upper limit on the degree of an annual rent increase and the conditions under which this can be graduated in light of repair and maintenance.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS – NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

### Decent Work that Pays

#### 1. Further raise the minimum wage

The NWT announced a change to the minimum wage for the start of September 2023 from \$15.20/hour to \$16.05/hour. This change represents a 5.6% increase, which the territorial government stated, “reflects the percentage changes in the consumer price index”. However, inflation for the 2022 year in the territory was recorded at 7% and living wage in Yellowknife is reported to be \$23.28/hour (as a bare minimum). We recommend that the government introduce a subsequent increase to bring the minimum wage up to \$17.50/hour before the 2024 inflationary increase is implemented.

#### 2. Review community benefits associated with major infrastructure and mining projects

With the recovery of global commodity prices and the increased interest in Canadian mining, the NWT is well positioned for investment and growth. It is important that all residents benefit equitably from these projects. We recommend the territory put an increased focus on securing not only jobs but also long-term training, apprenticeship, and community benefit investments that will help provide greater employment and economic development opportunities for lower-income residents in the NWT. An updated territorial policy, with enhanced minimum criteria, should be developed and led chiefly by a government agency that is not directly associated with the department of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

# NORTHERN CANADA

## Cost of Living

### 3. Index income assistance, the NWT Child Benefit, and all other benefit payments

The territorial income assistance, NWT Child Benefit (NWTTCB), and other benefit programs are not currently indexed to inflation, meaning their value diminishes in real terms every year. Given the surge in inflation in recent years, the territory has had to intervene with other help rather than have an automatic stabilizer to better assist residents in time of need. We suggest that the government comprehensively increase benefits by 15%, compounded over the next three years, after which time increases are indexed to inflation in perpetuity.

## Affordable Housing

### 4. Adopt meaningful rent control

The broad introduction of the Canada-NWT Housing Benefit rent supplement program, which to date has no active waiting list, offers an opportunity for the territory to take further steps to protect renters. We recommend the NWT consider implementing a rent control guideline policy, similar to those in Ontario and other provinces, that sets an upper limit on the degree of an annual rent increase and the conditions under which this can be graduated in light of repair and maintenance.

### 5. Develop a formal municipal matching fund for rental construction

Using Yukon's successful municipal rental construction fund as a model, the NWT should investigate the creation of a municipal/territorial grant matching model to assist developers of purpose-built rental construction. This can be developed with a small pool of capital funding to begin with, and scaled over time as dedicated funding is established.

## Community Infrastructure

### 6. Federal leadership to address critical infrastructure gaps in housing, food production, and broadband

The territorial government should make it a top priority to develop a long-term capital plan, jointly endorsed and funded by the Government of Canada, with the goal of reducing gaps between northern and southern communities in three key areas over the next five and 10 years: housing, broadband, and local food production.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS – NUNAVUT

## Cost of Living

### 1. Create an energy subsidy for households living on low incomes

The Senior Fuel Subsidy was created to help seniors offset the high cost of heating fuel in Nunavut. Although the territory provides an offset for carbon pricing, there is no broad-based support available to help residents under the age of 60 with the costs of heating their homes. These costs are already high, even before factoring in carbon pricing. Nunavut provides a subsidy to reduce electricity costs, but they are still about four times more expensive than in Ontario. The territorial government should develop a program, similar to the Senior Fuel Subsidy, that is specifically designed to help low- and modest-income households with the affordability challenges of energy consumption.

# NORTHERN CANADA

## **2. Increase and index the child benefit**

While the Nunavut Child Benefit (NUCB) provides much-needed support to families, it is not indexed, and so its value in real terms has declined throughout the years. Nunavut should follow in Yukon's footsteps and index the NUCB and allocate further funding to increase it to offset recent inflation.

## **Community Infrastructure**

### **3. Direct Quillic Energy Corporation to establish a timeline for cleaner, affordable power alternatives**

Building on the momentum of renewable energy deployment in Yukon and the NWT, the territorial government, as a shareholder of Quillic Energy Corporation, needs to be more forceful in establishing a binding and clear pathway for the broad-scale deployment of affordable clean energy at both the household and institutional levels. While this will require the support of the federal government to assist with some portion of the required capital subsidy, the territorial utility requires both a plan and the framework and infrastructure to make it happen when federal support is available. This plan must include a target for territory-wide access to net metering, the development of battery storage areas, and a mix of less costly and lower-emission sources.

### **4. Vision to address critical infrastructure gaps in affordable housing, clean energy, food production, and broadband**

Given the significant infrastructure gaps in affordable housing, clean energy, food production, and broadband – combined with Nunavut's limited fiscal resources—it is clear that the territory will need coordinated federal support to make meaningful progress on these various priorities. However, to do so, the territory, in concert with Inuit and Indigenous partners, must develop a comprehensive, long-term infrastructure plan with a set of actionable initiatives, and a delivery plan that includes clear timelines and prioritization mechanisms in approvals, that can be stood up if funded. This infrastructure plan should be based on the goal of bringing the infrastructure for each of these areas up to the national standard within the next decade, not only in Nunavut but ideally as part of a coordinated plan across all the territories.



# YUKON: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 1 GRADE: EXPERIENCE OF POVERTY

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE	METHODOLOGY
People Feeling Worse off Compared to Last Year	31.3%	A	This grade is based on the percentage of respondents who indicated they are financially worse-off compared to one year prior. The grade was given a weight of 25/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
People Paying More than 30% of Income on Housing	53.0%	F	This grade is based on the percentage of respondents who indicated they are spending 30% or more of their income on housing. The grade was given a weight of 20/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
People Having Trouble Accessing Healthcare	9.1%	B-	This grade is based on the percentage of respondents who indicated they 'somewhat disagree' or 'strongly disagree' with the statement 'I can access and receive healthcare anytime I need to' AND stated the reason was due to one or more of the following reasons: 'I can't take time off work'; 'I don't have healthcare coverage'; 'I don't have money for medication'. The grade was given a weight of 10/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Government Support Recipients Who Say Rates are Insufficient to Keep up with Cost of Living	31.8%	C+	This grade is based on the percentage of individuals who indicated that they 'personally receive some form of social security benefit or support' AND indicated that 'social assistance rates aren't high enough to help me keep up with the cost of living'. The grade was given a weight of 25/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Percent of Income Spent on Fixed Costs beyond Housing	48.8%	A+	This grade is based on the combination of results from several questions asking the average amount individuals spend on fixed costs like internet, transport, groceries, and utilities. The average amounts spent were converted into a portion of income for those earning \$75,000 a year or less (given in a range from lowest to highest). This number is the higher end of the range provided. The grade was given a weight of 20/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).

### SECTION 1: CONTEXT

Due to limited sample sizes from the territories, which hinders our ability to confidently address each territory individually, we have consolidated metrics for the North into one set of grades for this section of the report card. The results of this survey may not accurately represent the circumstances of all communities in the North.

This data collection issue represents a very real challenge that exists for poverty reduction efforts in the North. Without the capacity to collect regular, reliable, and representative data about the experiences of people living in these communities, there will be significant barriers to introducing effective policy solutions.



# YUKON: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 2 GRADE: POVERTY MEASURES

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE	METHODOLOGY
Poverty Rate (MBM)	8.8%	F	The poverty rate (MBM) is based on data from the Statistics Canada 2021 Canadian Income Survey <a href="#">table</a> showing poverty and low income statistics by selected demographic characteristics. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 25/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Social Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line (Singles)	66%	C+	This grade is based on the maximum annual social assistance rate (provincial only) for a single unattached individual considered employable compared to the official poverty line of the provincial capital (the Market Basket Measure). The data is from <a href="#">Welfare in Canada 2022</a> , available on Maytree's website. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 15/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Disability Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line	78%	B	This grade is based on the maximum annual social assistance rate (provincial only) for a single unattached individual with a disability compared to the official poverty line of the provincial capital (the Market Basket Measure). The data is from <a href="#">Welfare in Canada 2022</a> , available on Maytree's website. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 15/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Unemployment Rate	2.9%	B	This grade is based on Statistics Canada's <a href="#">Labour force characteristics by province</a> , monthly adjusted. This data is from March 2023. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 15/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Food Insecurity Rate	21.2%	D-	This grade is based on the combination of Marginal, Moderate, and Severe food insecurity rates for all persons in 2022 from the Statistics Canada's <a href="#">Canadian Income Survey (CIS)</a> (2021). The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 30/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).

## SECTION 2: CONTEXT

Yukon received a grade of a D+ in this section, which is highest among the territories.

Notably, Poverty Rates and Food Insecurity Rates were high for Yukon, receiving a F and D- grade respectively.

Social assistance rates in the territory are strong compared to the numbers seen in provinces to the south.

Unemployment rates are equally strong as many residents in the territory are employed in the robust natural resource sector.

Improvements to the incomes of all residents, including measures that focus on helping cover the higher cost of living associated with the North, will likely improve poverty and food insecurity rates.



# YUKON: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 3 GRADE: LEGISLATIVE PROGRESS

INDICATOR TITLE

GRADE

Legislative Progress



### SECTION 3: CONTEXT

Compared to the rest of the North, Yukon has slightly lower rates of poverty in part because of its high employment rates. However, a shortage of affordable housing and high rates of food insecurity mean many residents struggle to maintain an adequate standard of living despite their incomes.

Notable developments include:

- [Increasing the minimum wage](#) to \$16.77/hour, representing a 6.8% increase.
- Updating the [rent index and tenancy conditions to tie rent increases to inflation with a 5% cap and change rules about ending residential tenancies](#).
- Providing [inflation relief for Yukon Seniors Income Supplement](#) recipients with a monthly inflation relief payment that will amount to 39% of their YSIS payment (from March 2023 to March 2024).
- Introducing the [Paid Sick Leave Rebate Program](#). This program will provide workers and self-employed Yukoners with up to 40 hours of paid sick leave per 12-month period at no cost to their employer. The program covers all eligible workers earning less than or equal to the average Yukon private-sector wage of \$33.94 per hour.
- [Increasing the Yukon Child Benefit](#) to \$876 per child.
- [Expanding Chronic Disease and Disability Benefits](#) to provide support for alcohol use disorder.

Despite efforts to implement a 10-year housing strategy - with stated objectives to building supportive housing to meet the needs [of vulnerable residents, increasing the supply of rental housing, and diversifying home ownership](#), a report by the [Office of the Auditor General](#) (OAG) of Canada found the territory had made little progress in achieving its goals. As the territory's Housing Action Plan moves into its final two years, the social housing waiting list has [surged by 320%](#). While Yukon has announced several new housing projects this year, an ambitious and comprehensive housing action plan is needed to meet demand. Residents living in the Yukon face significantly higher rates of deep poverty and food insecurity. While the territory has taken some positive steps to address this deprivation, more work is needed to ensure those in the Yukon are able to enjoy a decent standard of living.

Yukon has taken action to increase wages and support for seniors, workers, and families with children. However, single people have seen a sharp decline in their standard of living and receive very inadequate social assistance rates (see section 2 of the report card). To effectively address poverty in the territory, it is crucial to prioritize support for this demographic and confront the housing crisis head-on.

For the above reasons Yukon received a C for this section. While the government has taken a few significant steps through introducing Paid Sick Leave and increasing assistance for seniors and families with children, it has largely failed to pass legislation that substantially addresses key drivers of poverty - in particular housing and social assistance reform for single adults. If the trend continues, it will likely result in stagnating conditions for residents.





# NORTHWEST TERRITORIES: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 1 GRADE: EXPERIENCE OF POVERTY

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE	METHODOLOGY
People Feeling Worse off Compared to Last Year	31.3%	A	This grade is based on the percentage of respondents who indicated they are financially worse-off compared to one year prior. The grade was given a weight of 25/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
People Paying More than 30% of Income on Housing	53.0%	F	This grade is based on the percentage of respondents who indicated they are spending 30% or more of their income on housing. The grade was given a weight of 20/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
People Having Trouble Accessing Healthcare	9.1%	B-	This grade is based on the percentage of respondents who indicated they 'somewhat disagree' or 'strongly disagree' with the statement 'I can access and receive healthcare anytime I need to' AND stated the reason was due to one or more of the following reasons: 'I can't take time off work'; 'I don't have healthcare coverage'; 'I don't have money for medication'. The grade was given a weight of 10/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Government Support Recipients Who Say Rates are Insufficient to Keep up with Cost of Living	31.8%	C+	This grade is based on the percentage of individuals who indicated that they 'personally receive some form of social security benefit or support' AND indicated that 'social assistance rates aren't high enough to help me keep up with the cost of living'. The grade was given a weight of 25/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Percent of Income Spent on Fixed Costs beyond Housing	48.8%	A+	This grade is based on the combination of results from several questions asking the average amount individuals spend on fixed costs like internet, transport, groceries, and utilities. The average amounts spent were converted into a portion of income for those earning \$75,000 a year or less (given in a range from lowest to highest). This number is the higher end of the range provided. The grade was given a weight of 20/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).

## SECTION 1: CONTEXT

Due to limited sample sizes from the territories, which hinders our ability to confidently address each territory individually, we have consolidated metrics for the North into one set of grades for this section of the report card. The results of this survey may not accurately represent the circumstances of all communities in the North.

This data collection issue represents a very real challenge that exists for poverty reduction efforts in the North. Without the capacity to collect regular, reliable, and representative data about the experiences of people living in these communities, there will be significant barriers to introducing effective policy solutions.





# NORTHWEST TERRITORIES: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 2 GRADE: **POVERTY MEASURES**

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE	METHODOLOGY
Poverty Rate (MBM)	10.2%	F	The poverty rate (MBM) is based on data from the Statistics Canada 2021 Canadian Income Survey <a href="#">table</a> showing poverty and low income statistics by selected demographic characteristics. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 25/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Social Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line (Singles)	112%	A+	This grade is based on the maximum annual social assistance rate (provincial only) for a single unattached individual considered employable compared to the official poverty line of the provincial capital (the Market Basket Measure). The data is from <a href="#">Welfare in Canada 2022</a> , available on Maytree's website. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 15/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Disability Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line	93%	A+	This grade is based on the maximum annual social assistance rate (provincial only) for a single unattached individual with a disability compared to the official poverty line of the provincial capital (the Market Basket Measure). The data is from <a href="#">Welfare in Canada 2022</a> , available on Maytree's website. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 15/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Unemployment Rate	5.2%	D+	This grade is based on Statistics Canada's <a href="#">Labour force characteristics by province</a> , monthly adjusted. This data is from March 2023. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 15/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Food Insecurity Rate	20.4%	D	This grade is based on the combination of Marginal, Moderate, and Severe food insecurity rates for all persons in 2022 from the Statistics Canada's <a href="#">Canadian Income Survey (CIS)</a> (2021). The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 30/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).

## SECTION 2: **CONTEXT**

Similar to Yukon, the Northwest Territories (NWT) received high grades in the assistance indicators but relatively lower grades throughout the rest of this section.

As a result, it received a C- grade in the Poverty Measures section.

Social assistance rates in the NWT are the best among the territories and provinces. In the case, of single adults, assistance rates provide incomes above the official poverty line.

NWT is one of the regions in which assistance clients with disabilities receive less money than people without disabilities. This discrepancy should be eliminated by increasing disability assistance levels to be on par.

Despite the higher assistance rates, the Poverty Rate is high, scoring them a failing grade. The Unemployment Rate is relatively low, earning them a C+. Changes to poverty and food insecurity rates will likely be helped by improvements to the incomes of all residents, including measures that focus on helping cover the higher cost of living associated with the North.



# NORTHWEST TERRITORIES: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 3 GRADE: LEGISLATIVE PROGRESS

INDICATOR TITLE

GRADE

Legislative Progress



### SECTION 3: CONTEXT

Poverty in the Northwest Territories is a deeply complex issue that is worsened by the enduring impact of colonialism. Small communities spread across a vast geography, combined with an extreme climate, mean it is difficult to establish infrastructure and deliver services to residents. Despite these overwhelming challenges, the NWT government continues to take strong action to help people struggling with poverty.

Notable developments include:

- [Increasing the minimum wage](#) from \$15.20/hour to \$16.05/hour.
- [Overhauling the social safety net](#) by:
  - aligning existing Income Assistance (IA) benefit levels with the poverty line and increasing income exemptions, among other changes;
  - introducing an IA program for seniors and people with disabilities; and
  - sending emergency payments to IA recipients during August fire evacuations.
- Launching a [new benefits portal](#) that puts all available funding programs into one directory to reduce barriers and introduces a [new Office of Client Experience](#) to support residents when they are accessing health and social services.
- Co-investing \$19.7 million to bring [high speed internet](#) from Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk.
- Combining [mental wellness and addictions funding](#) in one fund to make applications more accessible to communities.
- [Increasing the Child Care Fee Reduction Subsidy, helping to reduce the cost of child care by up to 60%](#), and introducing [changes to build an affordable and streamlined early learning and childcare system](#).

In addition, the territory has embarked on significant action by drafting a homelessness strategy (to be launched at a later date), introducing a credit score pilot program for renters, and announcing access to health benefits for low-income earners (starting April 2024).

The NWT faces a severe housing crisis, with more than half of residents spending more than 30% of their incomes on housing. Investments this year in creating new affordable housing units remain limited. The territory has introduced only one affordable housing commitment this year and it is [restricted to Yellowknife](#).

Residents living in the Northwest Territories face significantly higher rates of deep poverty and food insecurity. While the territory has taken some positive steps to address this deprivation, more work is needed to ensure those in the territory are able to enjoy a decent standard of living. The changes to the territory’s income assistance are very recent and the exact details have not yet been released. However, they show the NWT is listening to residents’ concerns and will likely make a measurable difference to poverty rates.

For the above reasons, the Northwest Territories received a B for this section. The government has introduced legislation that should lead to positive outcomes for residents with low incomes. However, more action needs to be taken on housing to ensure persistent and lasting reductions in poverty.



# NUNAVUT: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 1 GRADE: EXPERIENCE OF POVERTY

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE	METHODOLOGY
People Feeling Worse off Compared to Last Year	31.3%	A	This grade is based on the percentage of respondents who indicated they are financially worse-off compared to one year prior. The grade was given a weight of 25/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
People Paying More than 30% of Income on Housing	53.0%	F	This grade is based on the percentage of respondents who indicated they are spending 30% or more of their income on housing. The grade was given a weight of 20/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
People Having Trouble Accessing Healthcare	9.1%	B-	This grade is based on the percentage of respondents who indicated they 'somewhat disagree' or 'strongly disagree' with the statement 'I can access and receive healthcare anytime I need to' AND stated the reason was due to one or more of the following reasons: 'I can't take time off work'; 'I don't have healthcare coverage'; 'I don't have money for medication'. The grade was given a weight of 10/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Government Support Recipients Who Say Rates are Insufficient to Keep up with Cost of Living	31.8%	C+	This grade is based on the percentage of individuals who indicated that they 'personally receive some form of social security benefit or support' AND indicated that 'social assistance rates aren't high enough to help me keep up with the cost of living'. The grade was given a weight of 25/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Percent of Income Spent on Fixed Costs beyond Housing	48.8%	A+	This grade is based on the combination of results from several questions asking the average amount individuals spend on fixed costs like internet, transport, groceries, and utilities. The average amounts spent were converted into a portion of income for those earning \$75,000 a year or less (given in a range from lowest to highest). This number is the higher end of the range provided. The grade was given a weight of 20/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).

### SECTION 1: CONTEXT

Due to limited sample sizes from the territories, which hinders our ability to confidently address each territory individually, we have consolidated metrics for the North into one set of grades for this section of the report card. The results of this survey may not accurately represent the circumstances of all communities in the North.

This data collection issue represents a very real challenge that exists for poverty reduction efforts in the North. Without the capacity to collect regular, reliable, and representative data about the experiences of people living in these communities, there will be significant barriers to introducing effective policy solutions.



# NUNAVUT: REPORT CARD



## SECTION 2 GRADE: POVERTY MEASURES

INDICATOR TITLE	DATA	GRADE	METHODOLOGY
Poverty Rate (MBM)	21.3%	F	The poverty rate (MBM) is based on data from the Statistics Canada 2021 Canadian Income Survey <a href="#">table</a> showing poverty and low income statistics by selected demographic characteristics. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 25/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Social Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line (Singles)	N/A	N/A	This grade is based on the maximum annual social assistance rate (provincial only) for a single unattached individual considered employable compared to the official poverty line of the provincial capital (the Market Basket Measure). The data is from <a href="#">Welfare in Canada 2022</a> , available on Maytree's website. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 15/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Disability Assistance as a Percent of the Poverty Line	N/A	N/A	This grade is based on the maximum annual social assistance rate (provincial only) for a single unattached individual with a disability compared to the official poverty line of the provincial capital (the Market Basket Measure). The data is from <a href="#">Welfare in Canada 2022</a> , available on Maytree's website. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 15/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Unemployment Rate	12.1%	F	This grade is based on Statistics Canada's <a href="#">Labour force characteristics by province</a> , monthly adjusted. This data is from March 2023. The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 15/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).
Food Insecurity Rate	49.5%	F	This grade is based on the combination of Marginal, Moderate, and Severe food insecurity rates for all persons in 2022 from the Statistics Canada's <a href="#">Canadian Income Survey (CIS)</a> (2021). The grade for this indicator was given a weight of 30/100. Grades were determined using a grade scale comparing all provinces (see methodology section for more details).

## SECTION 2: CONTEXT

Nunavut is the only territory or province to receive a failing grade in this section.

The social assistance indicators could not be calculated as there is no existing MBM for Nunavut.

Developing an MBM threshold for Nunavut will be crucial to the territory's future success as it will help to provide a guideline for poverty reduction.

Unfortunately, the Poverty Rate in Nunavut is more than double that of the next most impoverished province or territory. The same is true for the food insecurity rate.

Changes to poverty and food insecurity rates will likely be helped by improvements to the incomes of all residents, including measures that focus on helping cover the higher cost of living associated with the North.



## SECTION 3 GRADE: LEGISLATIVE PROGRESS

INDICATOR TITLE

GRADE

Legislative Progress



### SECTION 3: CONTEXT

Nunavut has the highest poverty rate in Canada. Half of the territory’s residents experience food insecurity, and unemployment rates are persistently high. The legacy of colonialism deeply impacts communities and individuals, disrupting traditional ways of life. This results in unacceptable levels of inequality compared to the rest of the country. In 2023, the territorial government acted on a number of initiatives.

Notable developments include:

- Increasing [Income Assistance](#) through increases to the Income Assistance Program’s Basic Allowance. Households saw an average [benefits increase of 34%](#), except for households of two which saw their benefits rise by 18%.
- Announcing [150 new public housing units](#). Construction to start in Fall 2023.

The social assistance increases will particularly benefit single adults – one of the demographics most reliant on social assistance. They saw their benefits rise by an average of 34%.

Many of the initiatives in the territory are funding opportunities for other organizations to take action on [traditional childrearing teachings and practices](#), addressing food insecurity, supporting people with [mental health and addiction challenges](#), supporting [young people in crisis](#), and [expanding early learning and childcare places](#). While many of these initiatives are still in the early stages of development, they have the potential to have a positive impact on residents and reduce poverty.

Residents living in Nunavut face significantly higher rates of deep poverty and food insecurity. While the territory has taken some positive steps to address this deprivation, more work is needed to ensure those in Nunavut are able to enjoy a decent standard of living.

While the government of Nunavut is managing many geographic, financial, and equity issues that impact its ability to take large leaps forward, more can still be done to help impoverished people in Nunavut. Looking to neighbouring territories like Yukon and the NWT will provide some examples of policies that can be implemented in Nunavut.

For the above reasons, Nunavut received a C for this section. While the government has taken significant action to increase social assistance, it has largely failed to pass legislation that substantially addresses key drivers of poverty – in particular affordable housing. If the trend continues, it will likely result in stagnating poverty conditions for residents.

A light gray silhouette map of Canada is centered in the background. In the center of the map, there is a logo consisting of a yellow spoon and a yellow fork. The text 'Food Banks Canada' is positioned to the left of the spoon, and 'Banques alimentaires Canada' is positioned to the right of the fork.

Food Banks  
Canada



Banques alimentaires  
Canada

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