
Riding by Riding Analysis shows Child Poverty in Canada Knows No Boundaries

TORONTO – With Canada’s first federal Poverty Reduction Strategy expected within weeks, Campaign 2000 reveals a disturbing picture of the magnitude of child poverty in every federal riding. The ridings with the worst child poverty rates are home to the highest proportions of Indigenous and racialized people, recent immigrants and mostly mother-headed lone parent families. The report paints a stark portrait of inequality among children and recommends solutions and benchmarks necessary for the long-awaited strategy.

“Child and family poverty knows no boundaries in Canada: it is a reality in every single riding. Poverty means there are too many children suffering hunger, ill health and stress beyond their years in communities across the country,” says Anita Khanna, Campaign 2000’s National Coordinator. “Given Canada’s wealth, no child should go to bed hungry. No parent should be forced to choose between paying rent and buying medication or miss out on work or training for lack of quality affordable childcare. With every riding affected by poverty, every riding will benefit from a strong federal strategy.”

The picture that results from cross-referencing, riding by riding, child poverty with census data tells a tale of stark social exclusion. The riding with the highest child poverty rate is Churchill--Keewatinook Aski, Manitoba. Nearly two-thirds (64.2%) of children live in poverty in this northern riding, home to many First Nations. Four out of ten (40%) children live in poverty in Toronto Centre, the urban riding home to the upscale Bay Street corridor as well as large numbers of racialized people and recent immigrants.

Ridings with the highest child poverty rates have the highest unemployment and lowest labour market participation rates. They also have the highest proportion of renters and people spending more than 30% of their income on housing. The report shows how persistent discrimination and inequities underly poverty rather than mere bad luck or poor individual choice.

Campaign 2000 has called for a federal anti-poverty plan for decades. In recent years, we have welcomed important policy changes that support low income families, including the Canada Child Benefit, child care and housing investments and Canada Workers’ Benefit. There is much more to do to support children and families and to make poverty history in Canada.

“For the new PRS to deliver on its promise it must involve all three orders of government and Indigenous governments as well as the private and non-profit sectors,” says Dr. Sid Frankel, University of Manitoba. “But, the federal government must play a special leadership role. This includes intellectual and moral leadership in establishing targets and timelines and conditions for poverty reduction programs delivered by the provinces and territories to which the federal government contributes funds. The federal government must also exercise fiscal leadership in enabling provinces and territories to take bold action.”

The report calls for a legislated commitment to reduce poverty to be passed before the 2019 election. Further recommendations outline action to eradicate poverty among Indigenous people, stabilize and insure the adequacy of transfer payments, implement universal child care, implement universal drug and dental coverage, provide housing for all, improve income support programs like Employment Insurance and support for workers. The report lists clear targets and timelines to assess the strategy’s success, including calling for a halving of Canada’s child poverty rate by 2020.

“With every single federal riding in Canada home to significant numbers of children and families in poverty, all communities, all Members of Parliament and all political parties have a stake in the eradication of poverty in

Canada,” Khanna adds. “The long awaited and historic Poverty Reduction Strategy must finally harness the political will, dedication and targeted investments required to ensure no child or family lives in poverty in any corner of Canada.

“After decades of waiting for federal action, the first Poverty Reduction Strategy must ensure Canada stops only tallying the number of children in poverty and starts to number poverty’s days instead.”

Trends and Background:

- The riding by riding child poverty rates are organized in five ranges, called quintiles, each containing 67 ridings. The highest quintile comprises ridings with the highest rates of child and family poverty.
- Child poverty rates in the highest quintile range from 22.8-64.2%. Child poverty rates in the fourth, third, second and lowest quintiles span ranges of 18.7-22.7%, 15-18.6%, 11.9-14.9% and 4.1-11.8%, respectively. The data tables can be accessed at www.campaign2000.ca.
- 162 out of a total of 338 federal ridings have child poverty rates at or above Canada’s national rate of 17.4%. The average rate in the highest quintile is 29.6%, representing more than 400,000 children
- Twenty-six of the highest quintile ridings are in Ontario, half of these are within Toronto
- The ridings with the lowest rates are still home to over 90,000 low income families and nearly 150,000 low income children.
- Highest quintile ridings include the highest proportion of recent immigrants at an average of 15.7%. In contrast, recent immigrants constitute only an average of 5.9% of persons in lowest quintile ridings.
- An average of 37% of people in highest quintile ridings are visible minorities. This compares with an average of 14% in the lowest quintile.
- On average 45% of households in the highest quintile are renters as compared to an average of only 21% of those in lowest quintile
- In Canada overall, four out of ten (40.6%) low-income children live in rural ridings.
- Highest quintile rural ridings have higher average child poverty rates at 33%, compared with urban ridings at 28.2%.
- The highest quintile rural ridings include 120,350 low-income children in 60,070 families. Provinces with the largest number of highest quintile rural ridings are Nova Scotia, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, with four each. Of the rest, two are in British Columbia, while New Brunswick, Ontario, Alberta and Nunavut account for one each.
- On average, one quarter (24.8%) of residents in highest quintile rural ridings indicate Aboriginal identity as compared to 2.6% in urban ridings.
- Rural ridings have an average unemployment rate of 11.1% and an average participation rate of 60.7%. In urban ridings, comparable rates were 9.1% and 63.4%, respectively.

Campaign 2000 is a non-partisan, cross-Canada network of 120 national, provincial and community partner organizations committed to working to end child and family poverty that is hosted by Family Service Toronto. For all of Campaign 2000’ 2017 report cards, visit <http://www.campaign2000.ca>

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Francophone spokespeople available upon request; Regional media spokespeople from various provinces are available to comment upon request.