

CAMPAIGN 2000
END CHILD & FAMILY POVERTY

Saskatchewan Child and Family Poverty Report 2021

Dr. Miguel Sanchez
FACULTY OF SOCIAL WORK | UNIVERSITY OF REGINA



University
of Regina



SOCIAL
POLICY
RESEARCH
CENTRE
SPRC



Author:

Dr. Miguel Sanchez, Associate Professor, Faculty of Social Work, University of Regina.
miguel.sanchez@uregina.ca

Acknowledgements: We thank Campaign 2000 for providing data for this report. We also acknowledge the unconditional support received from Courtney Stange to elaborate the Saskatchewan report for the last two years.

Campaign 2000: Campaign 2000 is a non-partisan, cross-Canada coalition of over 120 national, provincial and community organizations, committed to working together to end child and family poverty in Canada. Campaign 2000 coordinated the preparation of the 2019 national and provincial poverty report cards. These can be viewed and downloaded at the web site www.campaign2000.ca.

We encourage readers to download, distribute, photocopy, cite, or excerpt this document provided it is fully credited and not used for commercial purposes. If you require further information please contact miguel.sanchez@uregina.ca or 306-585-4848.

Suggested Citation: M. Sanchez (2021). *Child and Family Poverty in Saskatchewan: 2019*. Regina: Social Policy Research Centre, University of Regina.

Poverty or Low Income Measure (LIM): In 2018 the federal government of Canada adopted an official poverty measure, the Market Basket Measure (MBM). The MBM is a political measure of poverty created at the behest of the various provincial Ministers of Social Services across Canada, which diminishes the incidence and depth of poverty in Canada. The Saskatchewan poverty report card produced for 2018 contained a critical analysis of the political nature of the MBM, the statistical ‘games’ that have been employed to fix poverty at a level desired by Social Service Ministries, and the nature and the quantity of the items employed to produce the MBM (see: Hunter and Sanchez 2018).

In this report we use the Census Family Low-Income Measure After-Tax or CFLIM. This measure of relative poverty uses a poverty level cut-off of one half of the median income adjusted for each family size. Any person in a household with income less than the LIM income levels shown in Table 1 is considered to be in poverty. While these LIM cut-offs are not sensitive to differing regional costs, they provide a standard measure of low income, or poverty, making it possible to compare poverty across Canada and internationally.

217,490 persons in Saskatchewan were in poverty in 2019.

This was 19 per cent of the 1,144,684 persons living in the province – a poverty rate above the 16.4 per cent rate for Canada as a whole.

73,520 of the 281,686 children in Saskatchewan were in poverty in 2019, a child poverty rate of 26.1 per cent. This is well above Canada’s national child poverty rate of 17.7 percent and is greater than in all other provinces and territories, with the exception of Manitoba and Nunavut. Children in lone-parent families had a poverty rate of 47.6 percent.

Thirty-two years after the promise made by the Federal Parliament to eliminate child poverty by the year 2000, the number of poor children continues to increase in Saskatchewan. In 2013, 71,700 children were living below the poverty line. In 2019 73,520 children were living in poverty in Saskatchewan. For the last 11 years, more than a quarter of Saskatchewan's children have lived in poverty.

Depth of poverty was greater in the Prairie Provinces than in other Canadian provinces. In Saskatchewan in 2019, the income for one-half of

families in poverty was at least \$13,482 to \$16,902 below the poverty lines shown in Table 1.

Government transfers in the form of child tax benefits, tax credits, and social assistance were important in helping to reduce poverty in the province.

Table 1: Canada LIM-AT Low Income Cut-Offs 2019 constant dollars

Household size	2019 After-tax income
1 person	\$ 22,518
2 persons	\$ 31,845
3 persons	\$ 39,002
4 persons	\$ 45,036
5 persons	\$ 50,352
6 persons	\$ 55,158
7 persons	\$ 59,577
8 persons	\$ 63,691
9 persons	\$ 67,554
10 persons	\$ 71,208

Note: Any person in a household with income below the LIM for their family type is considered to be in poverty.

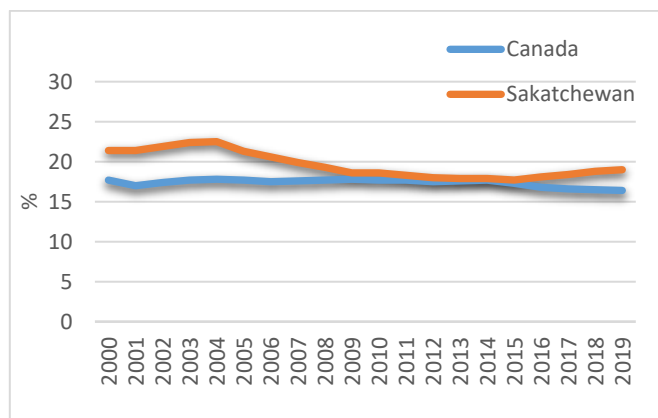
For Saskatchewan in 2019, the child poverty rate of 26.1 per cent would have been 39 per cent without these federal and provincial government transfers. That is, the provincial poverty rate was

reduced from one in three children to one in four through these government transfers.

Poverty Continues in Saskatchewan

As can be seen in Figure 1, the province’s poverty level peaked in 2004 and started a slight decline which ended by 2014. By 2019, the latest year for which income data are available, the Saskatchewan poverty rate (19 per cent) was still above the poverty rate for Canada as a whole (16.4 per cent). Since 2014, we also observe a slight but steady increase in the number of children living in poverty in the province.

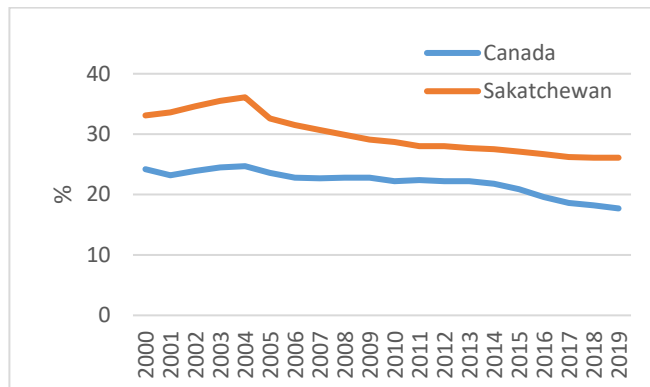
Figure 1. Percentage of all persons below LIM, Canada and Saskatchewan, 2000 to 2019



Source: Statistics Canada, 2019.

Figure 2 shows the effects of the economy on Saskatchewan’s children in relation to other children living in Canada. Similar to the general population, child poverty peaked in 2004, beginning a slight decline which ended in 2014. By 2019, the child poverty rate in Saskatchewan (26.1 percent) was still above the child poverty rate for Canada as a whole (17.7 percent).

Figure 2. Percentage of children below LIM, Canada and Saskatchewan, 2000 to 2019



Source: Statistics Canada, 2019.

There are 217,490 Saskatchewan residents, including 73,520 children, with incomes that are not enough to pull them out of poverty. These children and adults have difficulty feeding and housing themselves and do not have the resources that would allow them protection against the negative long term effects that poverty and discrimination have on social, mental and physical health and well-being.

The effects of the current COVID-19 pandemic are not reflected during the time covered in this report. The full effects of the pandemic started to be felt during 2020. However, in Saskatchewan, we know children and low-income people were already struggling before the pandemic. The Report on the Standing Committee on the Status of Women (March 2021) states the pandemic has worsened inequalities for already vulnerable people. Women, mothers, single mothers, visible minority women, black and racialized women and newcomer women are experiencing an exacerbation of economic inequalities.

The recent emergence of Camp Hope in Regina is a brutal expression of the inadequacy of government transfers and indolence at a time of the pandemic.

Child poverty

The national partner for this report, Campaign 2000, has focused on the issue of child poverty in Canada. Campaign 2000 has consistently stated that child poverty is not inevitable, but that it is a result of choices (Campaign 2000, 2015, p. 1). Federal politicians pledged to end child poverty in 1989, 2009 and 2015. As of 2018, child poverty in Canada continues to deprive over 1.31 million children of their only childhood (Campaign 2000, 2021, p. 1).

The number of poor children (those aged 0 to 17 years) in Saskatchewan has increased from 71,000 in 2013 to 73,520 in 2019 (Table 2).

Year	Count	Percentage
2009	71,720	29.1
2010	71,420	28.7
2011	70,740	28
2012	71,830	28
2013	71,700	27.7
2014	72,200	27.5
2015	72,750	27.1
2016	72,850	26.7
2017	72,260	26.2
2018	73,000	26.1
2019	73,520	26.1

Table 2 shows that for the last eleven years (2009-2019) every year more than a quarter of Saskatchewan children lived below the poverty line, demonstrating that during a period of growth in the Saskatchewan economy ending in 2014-15, little if any of the economic benefits reached the poorest in the province.

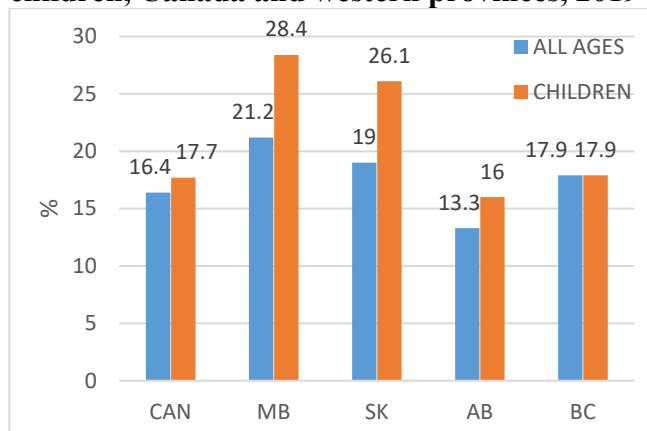
Table 3 examines poverty rates among children during their most important developmental stage, ages between 0-6.

Number of children below poverty line	Percentage of children below poverty line
26,490	28.6

It reveals that in Saskatchewan, the rate of poverty for children under six is even higher at 28.6 %, representing 26,490 children in poverty. The higher poverty rate for children at this important age of development is of critical concern given the life-long impact poverty has on educational and occupational attainment (Campaign 2000, 2021).

Figure 3 shows that Saskatchewan's child poverty level at 26.1 percent is well above that of Canada at 17.7 percent. Saskatchewan is well above British Columbia with 17.9 % and Alberta with 16.7% in relation to the other western provinces. Manitoba, with 28.3%, is the only province in Canada with a higher child poverty level than Saskatchewan. In Canada as a whole, and in each of the western provinces, the rate of child poverty is higher than for the rest of the population.

Figure 3. Percentage of poor persons and children, Canada and western provinces, 2019



Source: Statistics Canada, 2019.

Who are the poor?

Poverty is concentrated among specific groups and is not evenly distributed across the population.

Table 4 provides a picture of how poverty differed by age and family type for Saskatchewan in 2019.

A greater percentage of children were in poverty (26.1 percent) than were adults aged 18 to 64 (18.2 percent). Seniors, those aged 65 or more, present a poverty rate of 11.4 percent.

Persons living in families, especially couple families, are less likely to be in poverty than are those living alone or in lone-parent families.

Again, in 2019, almost ten to sixteen per cent of children living in couple families and of adults living in families had low income. In contrast, adults living alone (not in families) experienced a high rate of poverty (33 percent in 2019).

Characteristic	Population in thousands	Poor population in thousands	Percent poor
Children aged 0-17	281,430	73,520	26.1%
In couple families	800,714	78,470	9.8%
In lone-parent families	160,692	78,900	49.1%
Persons aged 18-64	676,484	123,120	18.2%
In families	959,634	152,380	16.4%
Not in families	182,152	60,110	33%
Seniors aged 65 plus	182,895	20,850	11.4%
Total	1,144,684	217,490	19.0%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2019.

The most pronounced poverty rate was found among children living in lone-parent families. In Saskatchewan in 2019, almost one half of children in lone-parent families experienced low income (49.1 percent). In nearly all lone-parent families living in poverty, the parent is female, with less than five per cent identifying as male. Without the possibility of dual earner incomes, adults living alone or as single parents are much more prone to poverty than those living in families with two or more income earners.

Child poverty by identity

We do not have data available to provide a closer look at child poverty in Saskatchewan by identity. However, from previous reports and the data used in the current National Report (2021), we can say that the dire reality of poverty faced by Indigenous, immigrant, and visible minority children in Saskatchewan has not improved. For example, the country's second-highest child poverty rate (57.7%) is found in Desnethé--Missinippi--Churchill River, a large Federal rural riding with a high First Nations population in Northern Saskatchewan.

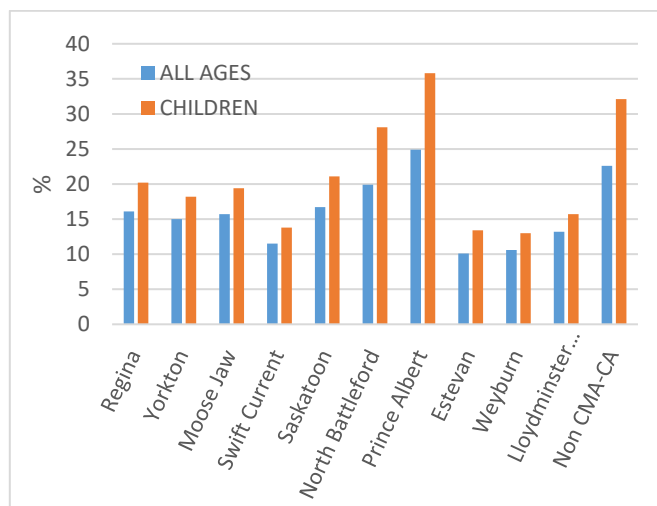
Poverty by city

Poverty is often concentrated in particular neighbourhoods, communities, cities, towns, and regions and is not spread uniformly across the province. In Saskatchewan, inner city neighbourhoods, small towns, rural areas, some cities, and the northern part of the province experience greater than average poverty rates. The data in this section provide a general picture of how areas of the province differ in terms of poverty levels.

Figure 4 gives the overall poverty rate and the child poverty rate for the ten largest Saskatchewan cities for 2019. The overall poverty rate in

Estevan, Weyburn, Swift Current and Lloydminster fluctuated between 10.1 percent and 13.2 percent. Most of the cities had overall poverty rates of 15 percent to 24.9 percent and child poverty rates of 15 to 21.1 per cent, each below the provincial average. In contrast, North Battleford and Prince Albert had overall poverty rates of 19.9 to 24.9 percent and child poverty rates of 28.1 and 35.8 per cent. What is especially notable though is the high poverty rate for the remainder of the province – the non-CMA or the area of the province outside the ten cities. This area comprises the rural population, the small towns and cities, and the northern part of the province. For this non-CMA area, in 2019 the overall poverty rate was 22.6 percent and the child poverty rate was 32.1 per cent. That is, outside the ten cities, one in five persons was poor and one in three children was poor.

Figure 4. Poverty rates for all ages and children, Saskatchewan cities, 2019



Note: Non-CMA, non-Census Metropolitan Area, refers to Saskatchewan outside the nine cities. Source: Statistics Canada, 2019.

These differing regional poverty rates help illustrate why poverty might not be seen by some residents of the province. For those living in neighbourhoods or regions with low child poverty

rates, it may seem that child poverty is not an economic, social, political, or personal problem. For those living in areas with high child poverty rates, the difficulties associated with having low income are daily ones – ones that a country as wealthy as Canada must solve.

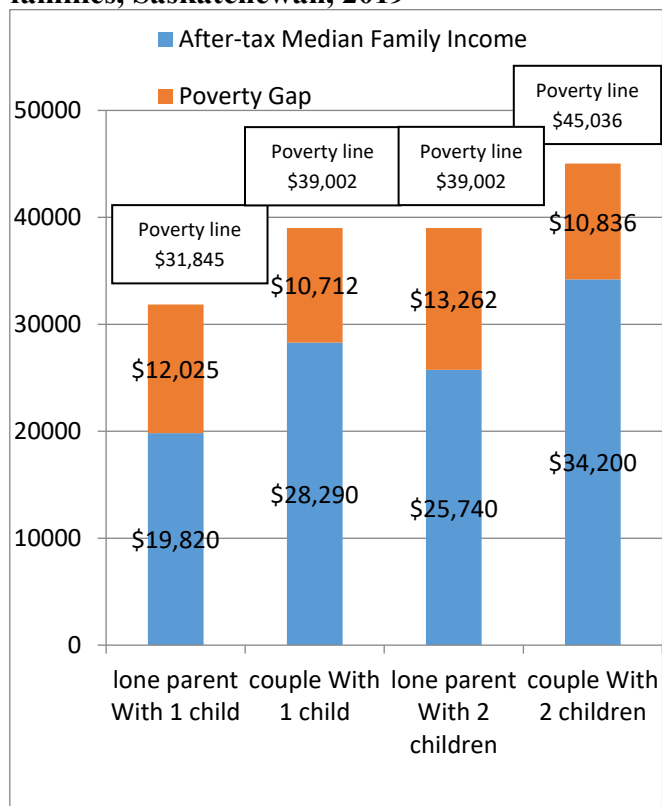
Depth of poverty

While the overall poverty rate for Saskatchewan (19 percent) was only a small amount above that for Canada (16.4 percent), the depth of poverty was much greater in the province than for Canada as a whole. For each of the three Prairie Provinces, the income for one half of families in poverty averaged \$12,531 to \$14,986 below the LIM poverty lines in 2019. For Canada as a whole, the comparable figure was approximately \$11,709. Figure 5 illustrates the profound depth of poverty that existed in Saskatchewan in 2019.

For a Saskatchewan lone parent family with one child in 2019, the poverty line was \$31,845. But the after-tax median income for poor lone parent families with one child was only \$16,460. That is, one-half of poor lone-parent families with one child had less than \$16,460 income and one half had between \$16,460 and \$31,845 income. Thus the poorer half of these poor families had so little income there were at least \$14,437 short of meeting even a poverty level income.

The situation for poor couples with two children and for poor lone parent families with two children was much the same – an extremely large poverty gap of \$14,176 to \$16,902 for the very poorest of the poor families with children. These data demonstrate the dire circumstances faced by many families with children – their incomes are well below what is necessary to meet even the minimal needs associated with a poverty level income.

Figure 5. Depth of low income for poor families, Saskatchewan, 2019



Source: Campaign 2000, special tabulation

Effect of government transfers

Government transfers in the form of child benefits, tax credits, and social assistance are an important source of income for many low income individuals and families. These transfers mean many escape poverty and they are a key source of income for those who remain in poverty. For Saskatchewan, government transfers help to reduce poverty in the province. The 2019 child poverty rate of 26.1 percent would have been 39.5 percent without federal and provincial government transfers as shown in Table 5. That is, transfers reduced the provincial poverty rate from one in three children to one in four – a rate that is still much too high.

Table 5: Effect of government transfers	
Child Poverty Before Government Programs (labour market poverty)	Child Poverty After Government Program Spending
39.50%	26.10%

Although we always hear from government and corporate sectors that the best welfare programme is a job, the numbers do not support that crass slogan. The fact that without social spending the precarious situation of children in Saskatchewan would be much worse is an indication that incomes derived from the labor market are insufficient for many working families. Table 6, provides the counts and percentage of child poverty among children 0-17 in Saskatchewan from only *Market Income* (wages and salaries only), before social spending:

Table 6: Child Poverty & Market Income Children 0-17 & Children 0-6 Saskatchewan - 2016 & 2019		
	Number of children below poverty line	Percentage of children below poverty line
Children 0-17	2016 (100,470)	2016 (36.8%)
	2017 (106,960)	2017 (38.8%)
	2018 (109,190)	2018 (39%)
	2019 (106,600)	2019 (37.9%)
Children 0-6	2016 (37,530)	2016 (39.7%)
	2017 (38,080)	2017 (40.0%)
	2018 (40,120)	2018 (42.2%)
	2019 (37,730)	2019 (40.8%)

Source: Campaign 2000, special tabulation

Income Inequality

“During the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, Canadian billionaires increased their wealth by \$78 billion. Over the course of the same year, 5.5 million workers lost their jobs or had their hours reduced by half”

(Campaign 2000-2021 p.13).

Income inequality is unhealthy for society and toxic for children. The National Report Card (Campaign 2000, 2021) notes that looking at distribution of income highlights income inequality. By charting the percent share of income by decile for census families for 2019 they demonstrate that the highest decile of families with children in Canada held 25.2% of total income, compared to just 1.5% in the bottom decile (10% of families in each decile) (see Chart 7 p. 13 National Report 2021).

They explain that this disparity is so significant that the top 10% of families with children held nearly the same share of income as the bottom 50% of families with children. In dollar amounts, the first decile had an average after-tax income of \$14,000, compared to \$74,200 in the fifth decile, and \$231,000 in the top decile (Chart 7, p.13). In 2019, the average income of a family in the highest decile was 16.5 times higher than that of a family in the lowest decile.

Saskatchewan presents a similar if not worse income inequality than Canada. Hunter and Sanchez (2019), using the then-available data look specifically at income inequality within the province of Saskatchewan when the oil and potash resource extraction industries were at their peak (2009) and 2015, the first year after the economic boom had ended in 2014.

They found in 2009 that the top income decile (i.e., the top 10%) received 30.1% of all wages and salary income. For 2015, this decile received 29.6%.

The bottom 10 percent of the population in Saskatchewan held less than 1 percent of all wages and salary income for 2009 (0.5%) and 2015 (0.5%). Their percentage of income from wages and salaries was stagnating. In addition, there was a disturbing pattern within the percent income shares among the two comparative years. The percent income shares is fixed with slight variation. The pattern of significant income disparity is deeply entrenched (Hunter & Sanchez, 2019).

When looking at cumulative percent and income share percent for 2015, the 5.4% income share of wages and salaries of the top one percent is just below the cumulative income of the bottom thirty percent who only receive 6.3% of the wages and salaries. Put another way, the 3,995 economic families that comprise the top one percent in Saskatchewan earn almost as much from wages and salaries as the bottom thirty percent, comprising 130,632 economic families (Hunter & Sanchez, 2019).

We share the National Report opinion that “Income inequality has widened over time, with income growing notably for the highest decile while incomes in other deciles stagnated or even decreased. At the same time, the intergenerational component of income (and wealth) inequality exacerbates inequality along racial lines, as many non-white populations were formally and informally prevented from accumulating wealth” (Campaign 2000, 2021 p.13).

Conclusion

In previous reports, we have asserted that the federal government must demonstrate with facts rather than ineffective measures such as MBM that “sunny days” have come for all children and families living in poverty in Canada. The federal and provincial governments can eliminate child poverty immediately. Using the available statistics (i.e., depth of poverty), the federal government can calculate the amount of money required to lift all children and families above the poverty line, and increase by that amount the funding for child benefits and the Canada Social Transfer.

Government transfers have proven to be a very effective way to reduce poverty. Their inadequacy is in the amount of money made available to families and children. The depth of poverty rates indicates how inadequate the present benefits levels are.

We are concerned. In Saskatchewan, as in every prior year we have reported, the child poverty rate for 2019 is discouraging and frustrating. This report shows the reality of child and family poverty in 2019. It does not consider the already visible adverse health and economic effects the COVID 19 pandemic has brought to the entire population, especially those living in poverty throughout the world. The current benefit levels available in the province have demonstrated their inadequacy year after year. The future does not bode well for low-income residents of the province – it seems likely that when data about the province's poverty rate for 2020 become available, there will be a significant increase in poverty.

Children will experience the effects of the pandemic for a long time. To continue the current low level of spending on cash transfers, social services, and tax breaks for families equals to setting more than 1 million children in Canada for failure. We will be responsible for allowing this huge inequality to grow.

Evidence demonstrates there is indifference to the plight of children living below the poverty line. In the present climate of “limited resources” people must ask their representatives that both federal and provincial governments be accountable for meeting their human rights obligations to provide adequate income support for all low income Canadians.



University
of Regina



SOCIAL
POLICY
RESEARCH
CENTRE
SPRC



CAMPAIGN 2000
END CHILD & FAMILY POVERTY

References

Campaign 2000. (2021). Campaign 2000, Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Canada. <https://campaign2000.ca/report-cards/national/>

Hunter, G. and Sanchez, M. (2018). Canada's Official Poverty Line: The Market Basket Measure. Appendix A. 2016 Saskatchewan Poverty Report <https://campaign2000.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/SaskatchewanChildFamilyPovertyReportCardNov2018.pdf>

Hunter, G. and Sanchez, M. (2019). Frenzied Non-Renewable Resource Extraction in Saskatchewan During the Boom Where Did the Economic Benefits Settle? Appendix A. Saskatchewan Poverty Report 2020. <https://campaign2000.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/2019-Saskatchewan-Child-Poverty-Report.pdf>