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AMAUTIIT

# Unveiling Poverty:

## Beyond Numbers, Beneath Lives

2023 Report Card on  
**Child Poverty in Nunavut**



IN COLLABORATION WITH

**CAMPAIGN 2000**  
**END CHILD & FAMILY POVERTY**

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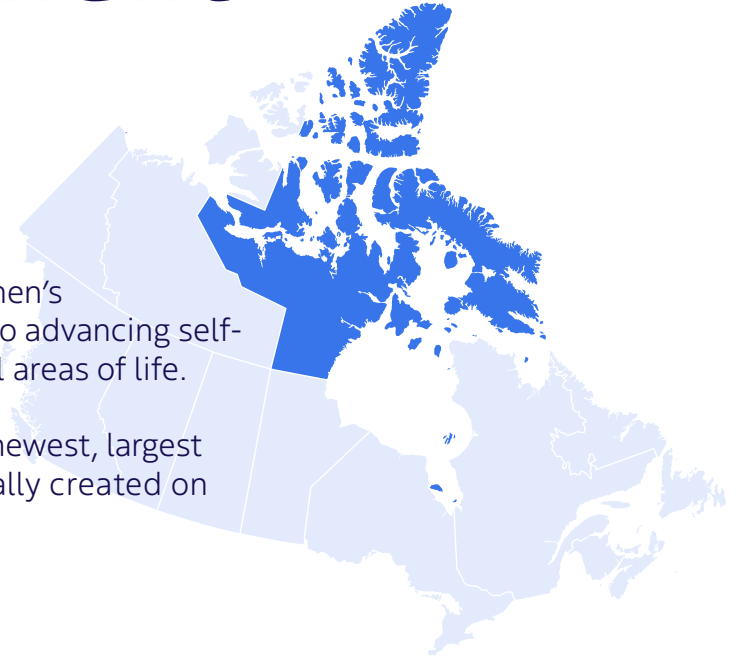


# Land Acknowledgement

## NUNAVUT

This report is created by Amautiit Nunavut Inuit Women's Association, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to advancing self-determination for Nunavut Arnait [Inuit women] in all areas of life.

Nunavut, which means "Our Land" in Inuktitut, is the newest, largest and northernmost territory of Canada. It was officially created on April 1, 1999.



**1,936,113 SQUARE  
KMS OF LAND**



**157,077 SQUARE  
KMS OF WATER**



**21% OF THE  
COUNTRY'S TOTAL  
AREA**



**ONLY ACCESSIBLE  
BY PLANE OR BOAT**

# Introduction

As the newest territory in Canada (est. 1999), Nunavut is a beautiful land, full of vibrant Inuit culture and the stark reality of colonization and intergenerational trauma from residential schools.<sup>1</sup> Every institution in Nunavut is either wrestling to decolonize or perpetuating harm against Inuit by upholding colonial structures. While Amautiit, the Nunavut Inuit Women's Association, is pleased to present the first Nunavut Poverty Report Card, we know that the existing data is limited, and cannot fully capture the reality of life in Nunavut, because of the ways in which data is collected.

The 2023 Nunavut Poverty Report Card will offer a snapshot of poverty in Nunavut and the various gaps in data collection by utilizing statistics and quotes from a community conversation about poverty from 2023. Many of the statistics are from Statistics Canada, but we will incorporate Nunavut specific reports, and reports by various Inuit organizations as often as possible to present all relevant information. The majority of the participants for the community conversation are from the Amautiit board, who represent communities across the territory.

Future iterations of the report card will include input from other community groups to create a fuller image of life in Nunavut. We will also seek to build capacity for Indigenous data sovereignty - defined as "ensuring Indigenous people are recognized in data and are part of — or in control of — their own data collection"<sup>2</sup> to ensure the continuation of accurate information. By seeking Indigenous data sovereignty, Inuit will also recover and maintain Inuit stories, memories and un-colonized information from the past.

One thing that came to light during our research, and has been shown in the research produced by other organizations, is that the lack of clear data for poverty and programming in Nunavut has been an ongoing issue within the various governmental departments for many years.



***...However, the majority of the information we requested is not tracked or was not provided by departments. In some cases, inaccurate information was provided by the department's own admission. Without this basic information about GN services, how can departments determine where they need to go when they do not know where they are?<sup>3</sup>***

In 2019 the the Representative for the Child and Youth's Office stated the above quote in the executive summary of their report.

We now feel obliged to do the same.

# Knowledge Gaps in Nunavut

In Nunavut, we do not know the true level of poverty. Why is this? Possible reasons are:

- ▶ There are multiple definitions of poverty used across the territory,
- ▶ There is a lack of sufficient collected or accessible data beyond the number of people on social assistance,
- ▶ The collected data does not appear to be aggregated to allow breakdown by gender, ethnicity, single mothers, elders, children, single men, disabilities...,
- ▶ There is a lack of data regarding those who would be defined as the working poor,
- ▶ There is a lack of data to compare communities, for example which communities have the highest levels of single mothers on poverty, Elders in poverty, residents in poverty etc.

**Without having clearer statistics and definitions, it is hard for the Government of Nunavut to track its own measurements of activity and success. Reports often simply state the activity and amount of funding.**

“



*I can't tell you, and I promise you the Government of Nunavut, no one could tell you this anywhere, which is the poorest community. We don't know. We couldn't tell you actually how many single mothers with children are in poverty. Yes, you can go to Stats Can, but those numbers are so wrong. So inaccurate, that under no circumstance is that the real number. We couldn't tell you how many elders are in poverty, and there's very little gendered information, class information. Working poor, you know? And what is the poverty line?*

From the March 5 2023  
Community Conversation in Iqaluit



# Report Methodology and Measurement

## CENSUS FAMILY LOW INCOME MEASURE (CFLIM)

This report features information published by Statistics Canada as part of the Census Family Low Income Measure, After Tax (CFLIM-AT). The CFLIM-AT is a relative measure of income poverty, where a household is considered low income if its after-tax income is less than 50% of the total population median after-tax income. The measure takes into account family size through adjusting for economies of scale. This calculation also takes government transfers into account.

The Census Family Low Income Measure (CFLIM) is a relative measure of poverty that tracks changes in living standards and compares the living standards of low-income individuals and families to that of the rest of society. The CFLIM is calculated using data from the T1 Family File (T1FF) tax file. The annual tax file is a reliable source of annual income data that includes communities with higher prevalence of poverty such as territorial residents, First Nations living on reserve, people living in congregate settings and institutions, people living in remote and rural areas, and families led by parents under 18.<sup>4</sup>

### POVERTY MEASUREMENT

Statistics Canada data is available 2 years after it is published - this report contains data from 2021, which is the most recent data published.



**In an effort to augment the statistics with lived experience in Nunavut, quotes from a conversation hosted by Campaign 2000 in Iqaluit, Nunavut on March 5, 2023 will be included in this report. These quotes can be identified by the microphone icon.**

# Market Basket Measure (MBM)

The Market Basket Measure (MBM) was adopted as Canada's Official Poverty Line in 2019 following the release of [Opportunity for All – Canada's First Poverty Reduction Strategy](#). According to the MBM, an individual or family is considered to live in poverty if their disposable income is insufficient to purchase a predetermined basket of goods and services required to achieve a modest, basic standard of living.<sup>5</sup>

## MBM AND NUNAVUT

Unfortunately, there is no MBM for Nunavut, which is a large gap in official poverty measurement. As of June 2023, there is a proposed methodology for attempting to calculate an MBM for Nunavut, which involves increasing the family size to 5 people, and some reflection of traditional Inuit cultural expenses.<sup>6</sup>

Because the Baffin example in the chart on this page is calculated from a proposed methodology, it cannot be used for statistics in this report card. However, it is worth keeping in mind that the poverty threshold for Nunavut may be more than double the poverty threshold in Southern Canada.



**Figure 1. MBMs of various rural regions compared to Nunavut's proposed MBM<sup>7</sup>**

| MBM Region                              | Total Threshold for Poverty |
|---|-----------------------------|
| Newfoundland and Labrador (rural)       | \$47,684                    |
| Ontario (rural)                         | \$45,932                    |
| Saskatchewan (rural)                    | \$45,324                    |
| <b>Baffin Region, excluding Iqaluit</b> | <b>\$113,498</b>            |

# Child and Family Poverty by the Numbers

Information According to Statistics Canada

As of 2021, there were **13,940 children** 0-17 years old in Nunavut according to census data.

**35.8%**, or 4991 of those children in Nunavut lived in low-income families.

The Canadian rate of child poverty was **15.6%**.



“ You put any sort of family of any society in 18 people living in a two or three bedroom, living food insecure, in poverty, you will get the same outcomes...There’s nothing about this that makes it an Inuit problem, or an Arctic problem. You put anyone in that situation ... people are stressed, anxious, fearful, angry. And sometimes it leads to violence... And high rates of suicide. ”





“ When it’s all around you, it really does feel just like this constant struggle to keep your head above water for everybody. But some of us have flotation devices, and some of us have a lot of ankle weights on us, you know? But that water is always there, and there’s always the threat that any of us could drown at any point. ”

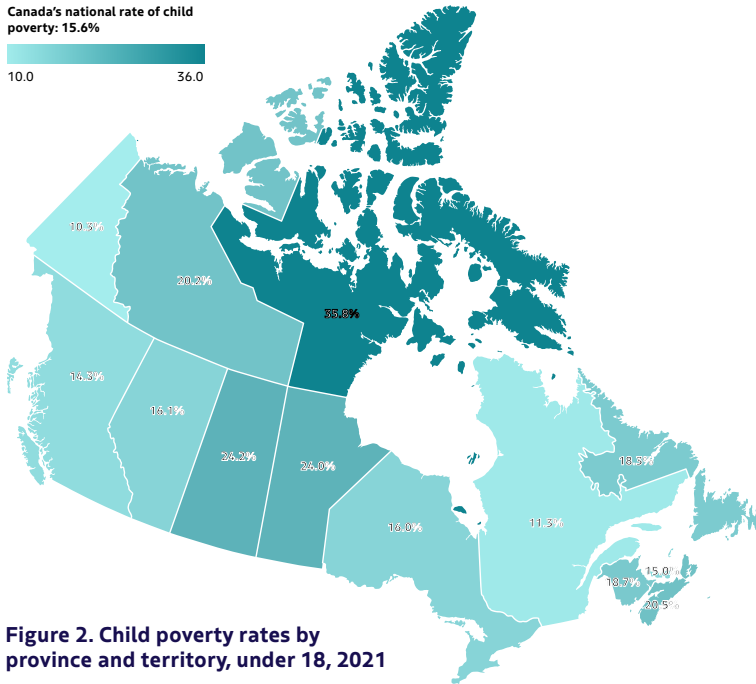


Figure 2. Child poverty rates by province and territory, under 18, 2021

## Child poverty rates by province and territory, under 18, 2021

In 2021, Nunavut had the **highest child poverty rate for children under 18** among the provinces and territories at **35.8%**.

Statistics Canada. (2023). T1 Family File. Table 11-10-0018-01 After-tax low income status of tax filers and dependants based on Census Family Low Income Measure (CFLIM-AT), by family type and family type composition.

## Child poverty rates by province and territory, under 6, 2021

In 2021, Nunavut had the **highest child poverty rate for children under 6** among the provinces and territories at **43.2%**.

Source: Statistics Canada. (2023). Centre of Income and Socioeconomic Well-Being Statistics, Annual Income Estimates for Census Families and Individuals (T1 Family File), Custom Tabulation.

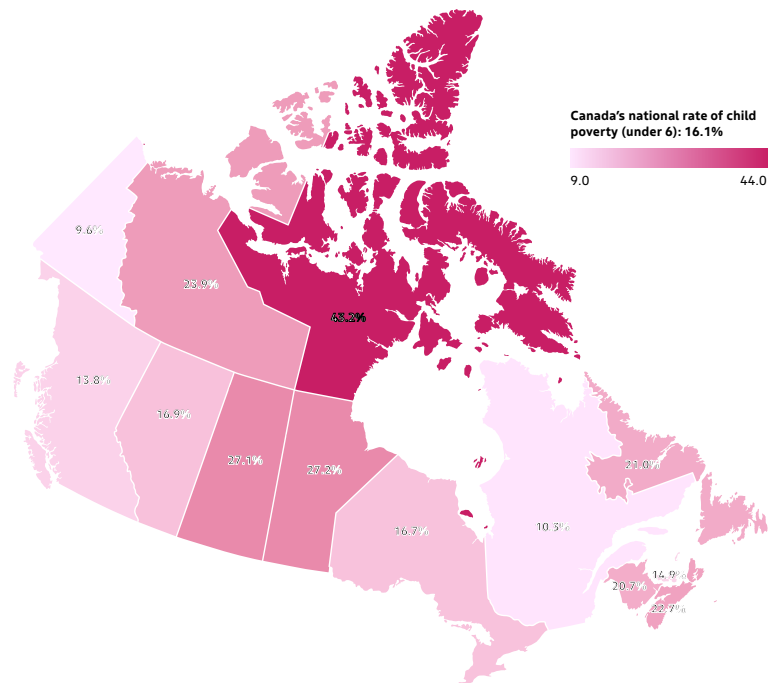
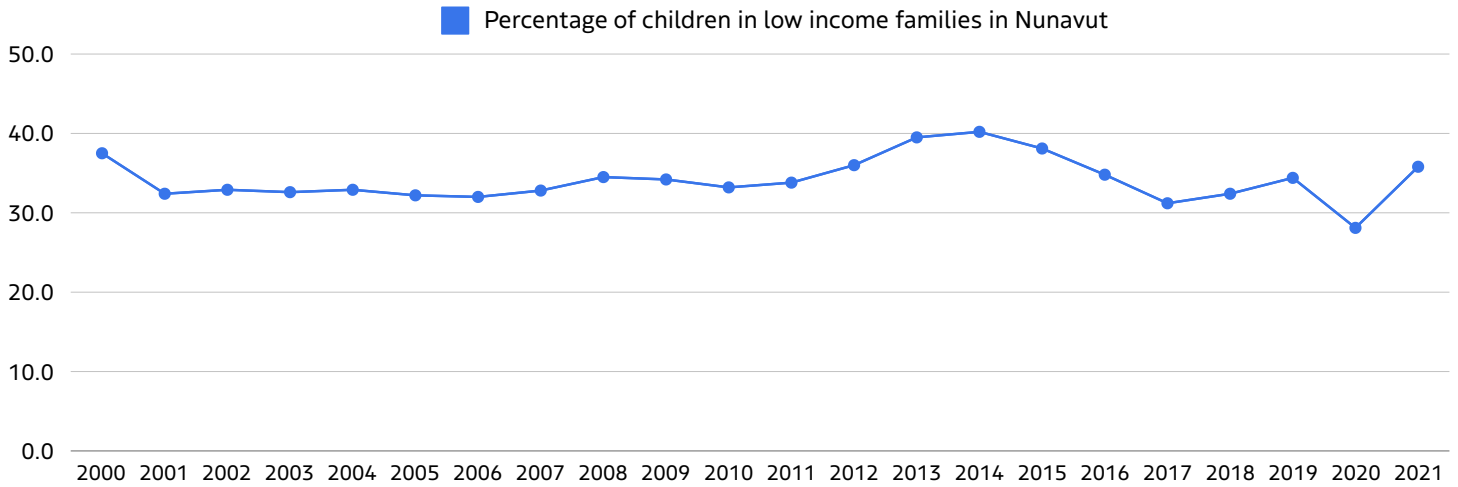


Figure 3. Child poverty rates by province and territory, under 6, 2021



“ Poverty stems exclusively, historically and currently, from government policy and decisions by government. ”

**Figure 4. Percentage of children in low-income families in Nunavut, 2000-2021**



Source: Statistics Canada. (2023). T1 Family File. Table 11-10-0018-01 After-tax low income status of tax filers and dependents based on Census Family Low Income Measure (CFLIM-AT), by family type and family type composition.

Figure 4 shows trends in Nunavut child poverty rates from 2000-2021. Rates remained consistent at about 35%, reaching a peak in 2014. Like other jurisdictions in Canada, rates showed a downward trend from 2015-2018 with the introduction of the national poverty reduction strategy and policies and programs like the Canada Child Benefit. After some increase from 2018-2019, rates fell again largely due to temporary pandemic benefits, only to rebound to levels comparable to 2000 in 2021.





“ At times I feel like I’m still living in poverty though I’m working full-time. The cost (sic) of living, it’s so expensive. ”



## Percentage point change in child poverty rates, under 18, 2020 to 2021

In 2021, Nunavut saw the **largest increase in the provincial and territorial poverty rates** for children under 18, up **7.7** percentage points.

Source: Statistics Canada. (2023). T1 Family File. Table 11-10-0018-01 After-tax low income status of tax filers and dependants based on Census Family Low Income Measure (CFLIM-AT), by family type and family type composition

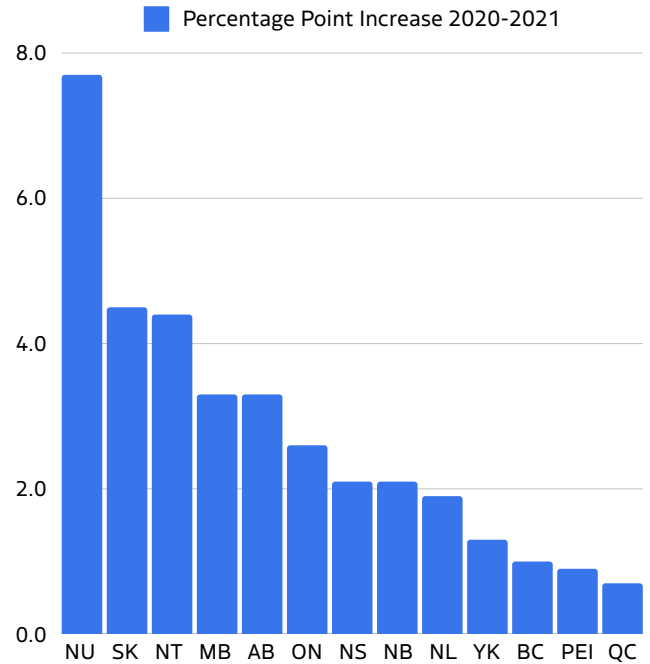
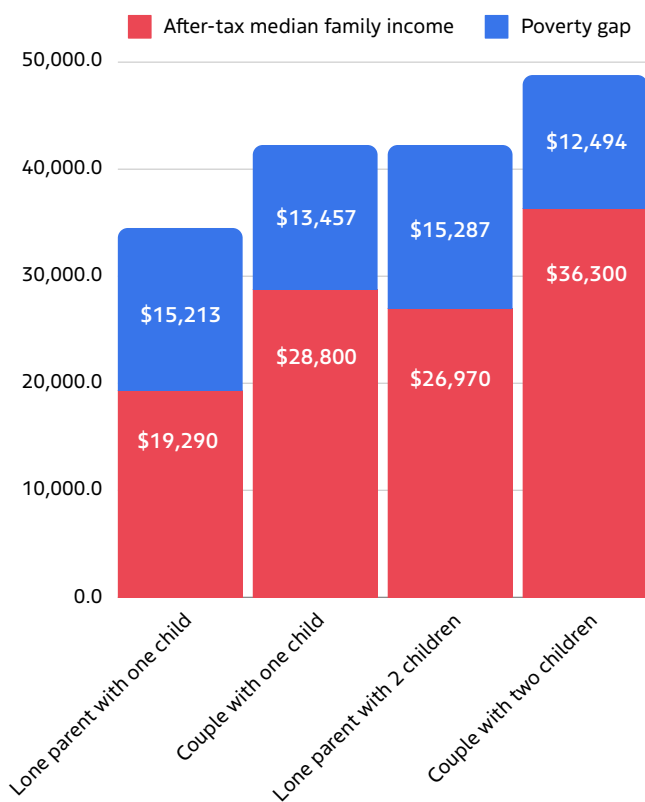


Figure 5. Percentage point change in child poverty rates under 18, 2020-2021



## Depth of poverty in Nunavut by family type, 2021

The depth of poverty is the difference between the poverty line and a family’s after tax median income. It is the amount of money required to lift a family out of poverty.

Source: Statistics Canada. (2023). T1 Family File. Table: 11-10-0020-01 After-tax low income status of census families based on Census Family Low Income Measure (CFLIM-AT), by family type and family composition.

Statistics Canada. (2023). Technical Reference Guide for the Annual Income Estimates for Census Families, Individuals and Seniors. T1 Family File, Final Estimates, 2021.

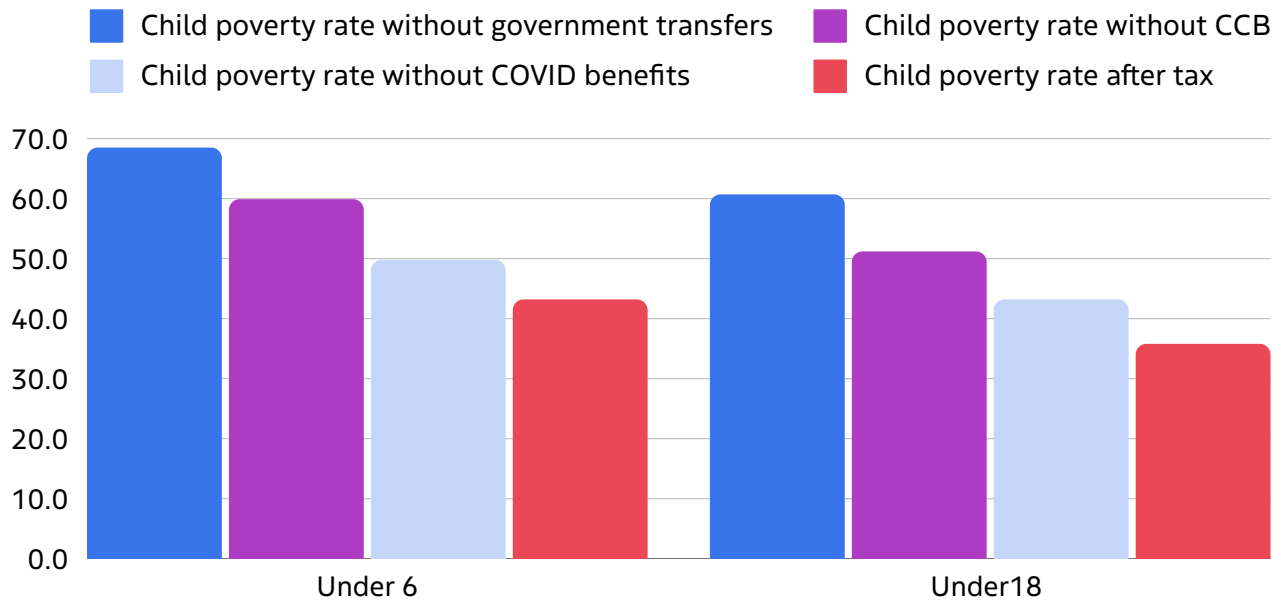
Figure 6. Depth of poverty in Nunavut by family type 2021



“ Most social assistance recipients are required to fill in their application month, after month, after month right? Even though the legislation says that they can just fill it in once for that year and be presumed eligible for the remaining part of the year. The social assistance workers weren’t aware of that. Or it’s kind of discretionary. And so they just make people apply over and over, and over again, wasting their time.



**Figure 7. Nunavut child poverty rates with and without government transfers, 2021**



Sources: Statistics Canada. (2023). Centre of Income and Socioeconomic Well-Being Statistics, Annual Income Estimates for Census Families and Individuals (T1 Family File), Custom Tabulation.

Statistics Canada. (2023). T1 Family File. Table 11-10-0018-01 After-tax low income status of tax filers and dependants based on Census Family Low Income Measure (CFLIM-AT), by family type and family type composition.

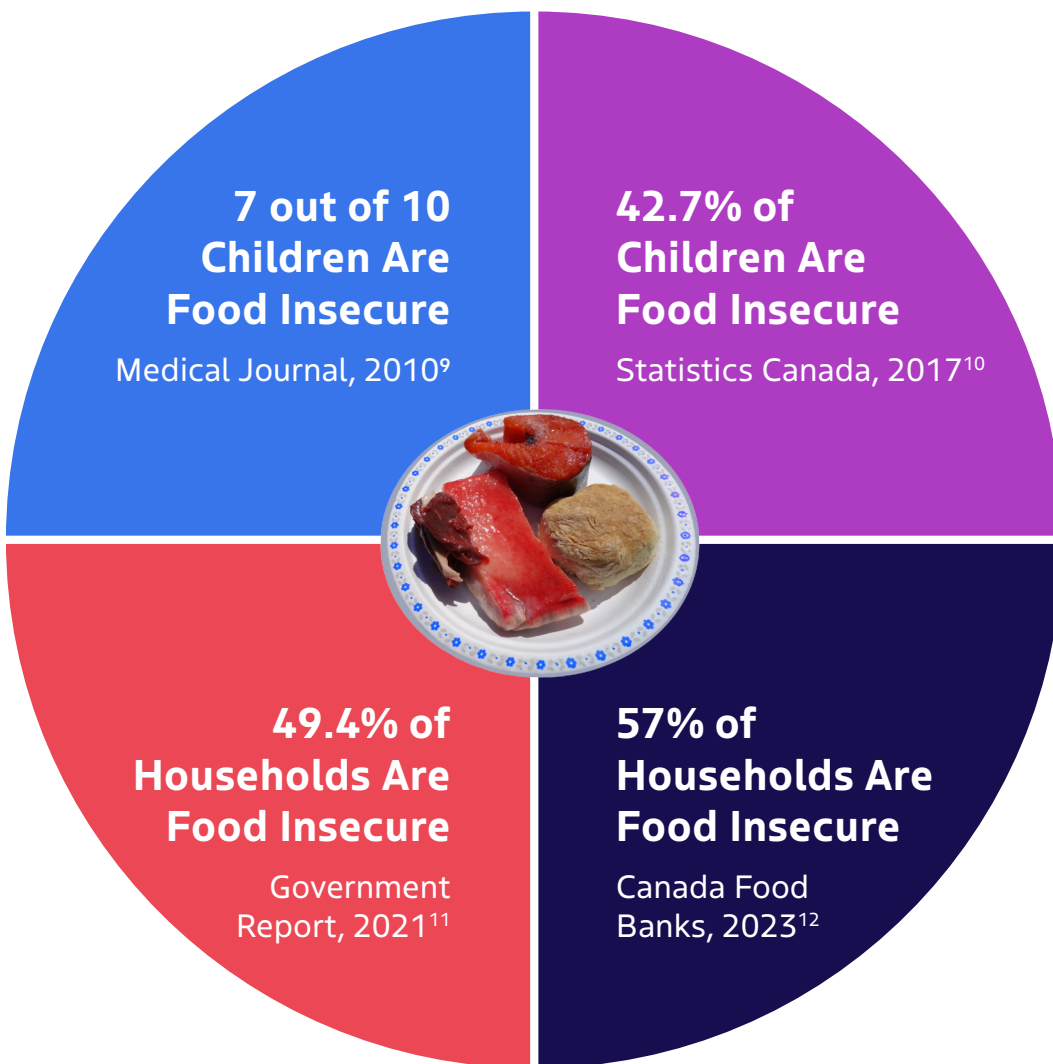


Government transfers have been shown to be a highly effective poverty reduction tool, when they can be accessed. They provide individuals and families with supplemental income, which reduces overall low-income rates. Unfortunately, to access systems to apply for government transfers one must be able to access the internet or a Service Canada location, be able to understand the form (both language and content), have a phone number for to list for any follow up calls etc. None of these circumstances are givens for the population of Nunavut, and thus we surmise the resources are likely being under-utilized.

# Food Insecurity and Children in Nunavut

According to UNICEF, "Poor nutrition in the first 1,000 days of a child's life can lead to stunted growth, which is irreversible and associated with impaired cognitive ability and reduced school and work performance."<sup>8</sup> Despite worldwide recognition about the importance of children being food secure - the statistics are dire for Nunavut, when they are accessible at all.

## NUNAVUT STATISTICS



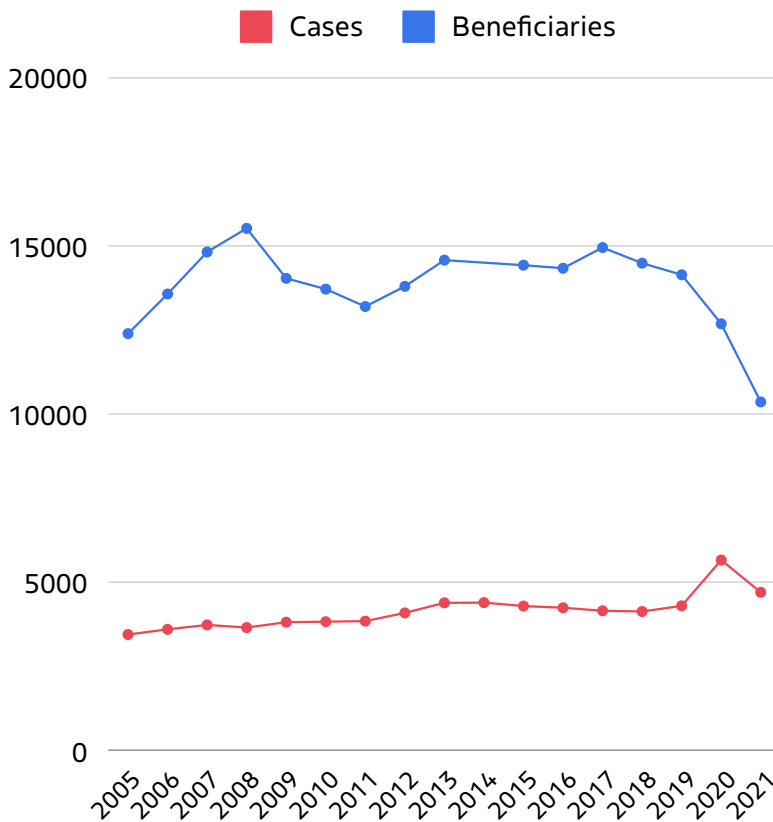
This is the type of measure that should be recorded annually and targeted with government programming, with frequent updates about if the programming is making a difference in children's lives.

It is concerning that the numbers that circulate about Nunavut all come from different sources with seemingly little continuity.

# Social Assistance in Nunavut

The Department of Family Services in Nunavut administers the Income Assistance program that supports vulnerable Nunavummiut who, for various reasons, cannot meet their basic needs. The program also aims to help Nunavummiut move towards independence and self-sufficiency. To help Nunavummiut on Income Assistance keep up with the increasing cost of food, the Department of Family Services increased the Income Assistance Program's Basic Allowance by 34% starting from April 1, 2023.<sup>13</sup>

**Figure 8. Yearly social assistance data for Nunavut 2005-2021**



Source: Maytree: Nunavut Social Assistance

The changes to Nunavut Assistance Program to try to incentivize recipients to make “productive choices” in order to receive or continue to receive social assistance on its face sounds progressive and good - however, the fact that many of the productive choices are not truly accessible in the communities e.g. mental health counselling or addictions treatment or access to hunting/harvesting by not having equipment and/or fuel/oil, bullets, etc., training/education, etc. means that those recipients who cannot avail themselves of these services - of no fault of their own - are put at risk of having their social assistance cancelled.



“ You understand that people live pay cheque to pay cheque. You also understand that there’s not necessarily room in their house to store an annual sealift. There are children who sleep in the laundry rooms of their housing units because there’s no room anywhere else with overcrowding. ”

# Nutrition North Canada

Nutrition North Canada (NNC) is a government program that was implemented in 2011 and aims to increase accessibility and affordability of perishable, nutritious food and eligible non-food items for residents of isolated northern communities by providing market subsidies to local registered retailers, distributors, and suppliers who pass the subsidy to consumers through price reductions on eligible items.<sup>14</sup>

It has been noted that food insecurity has increased since the inception of NNC. The annual rates of food insecurity ranged between 33.1% and 40.0% before the launch of Nutrition North Canada, between 39.4% and 45.7% during the implementation and 1-year lag, and between 46.0% and 55.6% after the full implementation. Overall, food insecurity affected 33.1% of households in 2010 (the year before the launch of Nutrition North Canada), 39.4% of households in 2011 (the year of the launch) and 46.6% of households in 2014 (the year after full implementation).<sup>15</sup>

We recognize that the program has changed and has addressed different aspects of food security at different times, but it remains clear that there are “substantial gaps in knowledge and limitations of available data on the effectiveness of NNC to reduce food insecurity, the importance of traditional food, and the limitations of a retail-subsidy to support the diet and cultural preferences among NNC-eligible communities.”<sup>16</sup>



“

*It's people in Ottawa deciding what people in the North should be allowed to eat.*

”



# Recommendations

All recommendations in this report were provided by the participants of our community conversation.



## FIX GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS, POLICIES AND SUBSIDIES

### ▶ Fix programs like Nutrition North and it's subsidies

*"There's no way to fix poverty unless the programs are fixed. Because we are so reliant on those programs that are supporting the retailers in the North. And then eventually supporting the airlines to be better. So, people have choices."*

### ▶ Be proactive with preventative investments, rather than pay at the other end

**Foster care:** *"The foster care parents in this territory get approximately \$1,000 plus per kid. Instead of actually the parent being able to get the money they need to not live in poverty that causes all sorts of problems."*

**Prison and legal system:** *"We are prepared to pay money when people get into trouble with the law with defense lawyers, Crown Prosecutors, police, the courts and put people in prison. At a cost of \$150,000 plus a year. And that's just the prison cost."*

### ▶ Pursue options to reduce the food to the North pipeline by exploring farming, greenhouses etc.



“ I've known one woman who was schizophrenic and she never spoke to the same counsellor month, after month, or year after year. And she's just tired of explaining her trauma over, and over, and over again to a new person that she gave up. ”





*“ You can’t lead by example if you’re so traumatised that you can’t or [have] never actually tried to heal your trauma in you. You can’t move forward or teach people. Or be there for the people that actually need you the most because you’re so focused on your hurt that you can’t think outside of the box ... there’s so much behind poverty.*”



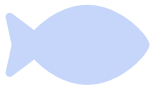
## SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION

- ▶ **Equip schools with more access to a variety of courses, and more consistent internet so that students can achieve their requirements for post secondary**
- ▶ **Provide a breakfast and lunch program at every school**
- ▶ **Teach financial literacy, budgeting, long-term financial sustainability in the school system:**

*“Giving cheques to people to have to manage is good, but I think there should be some sort of training around it. Like what are you going to do with this money? How are you going to spend it? We’re not doing that. We’re just saying ‘Here’s the money, fail.’ But once again we have to start fixing the solutions by starting in the schools.”*

- ▶ **Education should not just be in the colonial school system – there should be Inuit-led education, Inuit programs, language and culture:**
  - *“Life skills, and being able to communicate, and quit holding all that anger.”*
  - Teach children and youth about sharing and the value of each decision you make.





## EFFECTIVE SUPPORTS FOR COUNTRY FOOD AND HUNTING

- ▶ **Validate that local food is more nutritious than store bought food, more culturally enriching and allows for skill building and transferring knowledge to youth.**

Recognize these facts through a government program which support hunters and those learning to hunt.

- ▶ **Address the colonial attitudes, stereotypes and lack of understanding that government brings to hunting**

*"There's this tendency to really want to be supportive of hunters in a specific way...where it aligns with this romantic, idealised version of somebody who's in tune with the land. [That] forgets that they're also real people with real families, and real lives."*



## BUILD CAPACITY FOR INUIT-LED SOLUTIONS AND DATA COLLECTION

- ▶ **Policies need to be evaluated by the people they affect**
- ▶ **Build support systems that are robust and have capacity to have people offering support**

*"In Cambridge Bay, the municipality was literally going to go door to door to (sic) talk to every household about what their reality was. Other than Iqaluit you could do that in every community. You could hire people from that community, that people trust, and collect that data. And reveal the truth, but we instead have these public meetings like the Anti-Poverty Secretary travelled around...instead of actually hiring people in the communities to go to people's homes. And to go with like a \$50 food voucher...There needs to be trust and understanding what the value of that data collection is. So, it's not going to be used against them, and it's going to be truly anonymized."*

# Conclusion

Poverty is a prevalent issue in Nunavut, and it is minimized when we only consider data compiled by Statistics Canada. The gaps evident in poverty research force poverty reduction strategies to stay vague and unmeasurable, leading to further gaps and limitations. We believe that any of the recommendations contained within this report would make a tangible difference in the lives of Nunavummiut and could create a new path that looks at holistic changes. We look forward to tracking these changes and the evolution of poverty data as we work with other stakeholders and non-profits in Nunavut for future report cards.



“

*We've been talking about this. I've been around 30 plus years saying the same stuff. And it's just another report.*

”



# Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Qikiqtani Inuit Association. Qikiqtani Truth Commission: Thematic Reports and Special Studies 1950-1975. Inhabit Media Incorporated, 2014. QTC Commission, [https://www.qtccommission.ca/sites/default/files/public/thematic\\_reports/thematic\\_reports\\_english\\_final\\_report.pdf](https://www.qtccommission.ca/sites/default/files/public/thematic_reports/thematic_reports_english_final_report.pdf).

<sup>2</sup>Beaulne-Stuebing, Laura. "Why Indigenous people are fighting for data sovereignty." CBC, 31 March 2024, <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/unreserved/why-indigenous-people-are-fighting-for-data-sovereignty-1.7158508>.

<sup>3</sup>Representative for Child and Youth's Office. 2019-2020 Annual Report. Representative for Child and Youth's Office, 2020. Representative for Child and Youth's Office, <https://rcynu.ca/whats-new/publications>.

<sup>4</sup>Campaign 2000. Unprecedented Progress on Poverty Reduction Being Undone. Campaign 2000, <https://campaign2000.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/C2000-2023-Update-on-Child-and-Family-Poverty-in-Canada.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup>Devin, Nancy, et al. "Income Research Paper Series Launch of the Third Comprehensive Review of the Market Basket Measure." Statistique Canada, 6 June 2023, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75f0002m/75f0002m2023007-eng.htm>.

<sup>6</sup>Devin, Nancy, et al. "Income Research Paper Series Construction of a Northern Market Basket Measure of poverty for Nunavut." Statistique Canada, 21 June 2023, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75f0002m/75f0002m2022003-eng.htm>.

<sup>7</sup>Gustajtis, Burton, and Andrew Heisz. "Market Basket Measure poverty thresholds and provisional poverty trends for 2021 and 2022." Statistique Canada, 17 January 2023, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75f0002m/75f0002m2022008-eng.htm>

<sup>8</sup>United Nations Foundation. "Why You Should Care About the Hunger Crisis." Giving Compass, 2023, <https://givingcompass.org/article/why-you-should-care-about-the-hunger-crisis>.

<sup>9</sup>Egeland, Grace M., et al. "Food insecurity among Inuit preschoolers: Nunavut Inuit Child Health Survey, 2007–2008." Canadian Medical Association Journal, vol. 182, no. 3, 2010, pp. 243–248. CMAJ, <https://www.cmaj.ca/content/182/3/243#:~:text=Results%3A%20Nearly%2070%25%20of%20Inuit,%5D%2064.7%25%E2%80%9374.6%25>.

<sup>10</sup>Burton, Samantha. "Food Insecurity in Nunavut: An Ongoing Issue." Canada Without Poverty, 1 June 2021, <https://cwp-csp.ca/2021/06/food-insecurity-in-nunavut-an-ongoing-issue/>.

<sup>11</sup>Representative for Child and Youth's Office. 2021-2022 Annual Report. 2023.

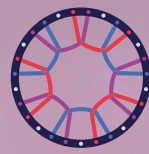
<sup>12</sup>Food Banks Canada. "Northern Food Insecurity." Food Banks Canada, 2024, <https://foodbankscanada.ca/northern-food-security/>.

<sup>13</sup>Department of Family Services, Nunavut. Minister's 2022-2023 Annual Report on Poverty Reduction. Government of Nunavut, <https://www.gov.nu.ca/sites/default/files/documents/2024-03/Minister%27s%20Annual%20Report%20PRD%202022-2023%20English.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup>Int J Circumpolar Health. "The impacts of the Nutrition North Canada program on the accessibility and affordability of perishable, nutritious foods among eligible communities: a scoping review." International Journal for Circumpolar Health, vol. 83, no. 1, 2023, p. 1. ncbi.nlm, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10863516/>.

<sup>15</sup>Fafard St Germain, Andrea-Ann. "Food insecurity in Nunavut following the introduction of Nutrition North Canada." Canadian Medical Association Journal, vol. 191, no. 20, 2019, pp. 552–558. NCBI, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6529307/>.

<sup>16</sup>Int J Circumpolar Health. "The impacts of the Nutrition North Canada program on the accessibility and affordability of perishable, nutritious foods among eligible communities: a scoping review." International Journal for Circumpolar Health, vol. 83, no. 1, 2023, p. 1. ncbi.nlm, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10863516/>.



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