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# 2024 REPORT CARD ON CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY IN NOVA SCOTIA

Swift action is needed for child and family wellbeing

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# **2024 report card on child and family poverty in Nova Scotia**

Swift action is needed for child and family wellbeing

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# Summary

This year marks the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary since the passing of the unanimous all-party Federal resolution to end child poverty in Canada by the year 2000. And yet, this report card documents another year that saw a historic year-over-year increase in Nova Scotia child poverty. Tax filer data for 2022 captures an increase in child poverty of 16 per cent, from 20.5 per cent to 23.8 per cent. This increase is all the more troubling because this is the highest single-year increase in Nova Scotia since that pledge was made in 1989. With more than one of every five children living in low-income families and an increase of more than 6,000 children to 41,500, we should be ashamed of the lack of progress and concerned about this troubling trend. Nova Scotia continues to have the highest child poverty rate in Atlantic Canada and the fifth highest in Canada (third highest among provinces). It has performed the second worst of all provinces and territories in reducing child poverty from 1989 levels (reducing it by only 2.5 per cent).

Some children face higher poverty rates than others based on many factors, including where and with whom they live, their age, race, immigration or Indigenous status, as follows:

**By geography:**

- When comparing communities using census divisions, the child poverty rates are highest in Digby (36.1 per cent), Annapolis (34.4 per cent), and Cape Breton (32.4 per cent). All Census Divisions in Nova Scotia saw increased child poverty since 2021, with Shelburne, Digby, and Annapolis seeing the largest.
- Smaller geographic divisions (rural routes and postal areas) show more variance, with one-third of the postal areas reporting child

poverty rates of 30 per cent and higher. The range of rates is quite significant, from a low of 3.7 per cent in Upper Tantallon to a high of 66.7 per cent in North Preston.

- Higher child poverty rates in certain areas of urban Nova Scotia are disguised. For example, within the Halifax postal city, rates range from 17.6 per cent (B3P codes—Bedford) to a high of 41.9 per cent in Spryfield (B3J codes) and 41 per cent in downtown Halifax (B3J codes). Similarly, rates range in the Dartmouth postal city from 21.6 per cent in the Lake Charles/Micmac/Topsail area (B2X codes) to 32.4 per cent in the area that includes North Dartmouth/Harbourview/Highfield Park/Albro Lake/Crichton Park neighbourhoods (B3A codes).
- Substantial increases in child poverty rates occurred between 2021 and 2022, notably in some rural communities in Western Nova Scotia; Meadowvale (99.5 per cent increase), Wilmot (88.5 per cent increase), Barrington (80.5 per cent increase), Sandy Point (69 per cent increase), Church Point (67.4 per cent increase), and Bear River (63.1 per cent increase).

**By age:** Like in the last report card, the child poverty rate for children under 6 was higher than for all children at 26.4 per cent.

**By family type:** In 2022, 50.4 per cent of the children living in lone parent families in Nova Scotia lived in poverty, a 12 per cent increase. This is much higher than the 11.9 per cent rate for children who live in couple families.

**By family size:** Children who live in families with three or more children had a poverty rate of 29.1 per cent; compared to 24.8 per cent for families with only one child, and 18.1 per cent for families with two children. For lone-parent families the rate was 44.9 per cent in families with one child, 45.8 per cent for families with two children, and 60.9 per cent in families with three or more children.

**Gender matters:** We know from our previous analysis of Census data (2021) that 85 per cent of lone-parent families are mother-led, and mother-led families had higher rates of child poverty than father-led families (37.8 per cent versus 28.7 per cent), underscoring the gendered nature of poverty.

**By race and immigration status:**

- While no new disaggregated data is available to report, we know from 2021 Census data that low income among new immigrant children (33.1 per cent) is higher than non-immigrant children (15.9 per cent).

- The Census also shows that child poverty for all children was 17.2 per cent compared to 28.9 per cent for racialized children.
- Based on 2022 tax filer data, we also know that there are higher child poverty rates in postal geographies for census profiles reporting high populations of African Nova Scotian children. The child poverty rate in North Preston (postal city) was 66.7 per cent in 2022 and 40.9 per cent in East Preston (postal city). The Rural Route B0V1A0 (Bay View/Digby) community had a child poverty rate of 41 per cent, and the FSA postal codes B3K (Halifax North End) 34.9 per cent.

**For Indigenous children:** Census data shows higher rates for on-reserve Indigenous children (43.5 per cent) and off-reserve (22.4 per cent) compared to non-Indigenous children (16.5 per cent).

**Children with disabilities:** There is no recent data on the number of children with disabilities living in poverty. However, people with disabilities are twice as likely to live in poverty as people without disabilities. Nova Scotia had the highest percentage of people (37.9) with disabilities in Canada in 2022.

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## Ending child poverty in Nova Scotia: summary of the roadmap

The poverty rates discussed in this report are based on measures of low-income and thus reflect the struggles of families with children to access sufficient income to afford essentials. Nova Scotia's approach has been stingy and targeted, leaving many families unable to support and safeguard their own children's wellbeing. A generous, multi-pronged and sustained approach is needed.

### Income insecurity

The data does show federal and provincial government transfers in 2022 reduced child poverty by 40.5 per cent and lifted 28,320 children 0-17 out of poverty. Without these benefits, the child poverty rate in Nova Scotia in 2022 would have been 40 per cent. However, we also note that these transfers are less effective at doing so compared to 2021. Last year's report card<sup>1</sup> (reporting on 2021 data) showed that these transfers decreased poverty by 50.5 per cent and lifted just over 36,000 children out of poverty. In 2022, six other provinces/territories were more effective in reducing child poverty through government transfers than Nova Scotia.

In the Atlantic provinces, Nova Scotia's poverty reduction due to transfers was the least effective.

We also know that employment is not necessarily a ticket out of poverty or income insecurity, as continues to be often assumed. In Nova Scotia, the minimum wage is at least \$10 an hour below the living wage, and one in three workers earns \$20 or less an hour. Thus, many working parents are struggling to make ends meet.

While most of this report's data focuses on income poverty, it also includes essential data on food and housing insecurity to further underscore the consequences and experiences of poverty.

### Food insecurity

Low-income families experience much higher rates of household food insecurity. In 2022, 40.1 per cent of Nova Scotia children (the second highest in Canada) were living in food insecure households, representing 71,000 children. In 2022, compared to all households, non-racialized households had lower rates of food insecurity in Nova Scotia (27.6 per cent), as did non-Indigenous households (28.3 per cent).

### Housing insecurity

Accessing affordable, secure, quality housing is critical to ending child and family poverty. Being insecurely housed and in core housing need could be because the housing people have access to is unaffordable, unsuitable, inadequate, or a combination of these factors. Housing is unaffordable if it costs 30 per cent or more of the household's income, and the more unaffordable it is, the more at risk of becoming unhoused.

- In Nova Scotia, 12.9 per cent of all households were in core housing need in 2022, and 29 per cent of rural rental households.
- Close to 70 per cent of low-income families that rent in Nova Scotia pay more than 30 per cent of their income on housing costs, and 37.6 per cent pay 50 per cent or more.
- For low-income homeowners, 37.5 per cent spend more than 30 per cent on housing costs, and 19.1 per cent spend more than 50 per cent of income.

Notwithstanding the important role that the federal government plays in ending child and family poverty, as outlined in the *2024 Child and Family Poverty in Canada Report Card*,<sup>2</sup> the roadmap in this report contains policy recommendations for the provincial government to address the root causes of poverty and all forms of related insecurity.

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## Summary of recommendations

- Implement and fund a Poverty Elimination Plan for Nova Scotia with targets and timelines to end child poverty by 2031.
- Immediately establish the Child and Youth Advocacy Office and develop targets and timelines in a Wellbeing Strategy for Children and Youth.
- Fundamentally transform the child welfare and social assistance systems to achieve meaningful rights-based, trauma-informed outcomes.
- Significantly improve and prioritize income support to lift families with children out of poverty.
- Establish conditions for decent work and quality job creation to ensure work not only lifts families out of poverty, but enables them and their children to thrive.
- Realize and protect children's right to housing and food.
- More investments in public services and social infrastructure.
- Centre intersectional solutions, taking a pro-equity, anti-colonial, anti-racist approach to uproot all forms of discrimination as root causes of child poverty.

# Introduction

**O**n November 24th, 1989, a motion was passed in the Canadian House of Commons to eliminate poverty among Canadian children by the year 2000. The federal government had thirty-five years to get the job done. Instead, over those thirty-five years, many Canadian children were trapped in poverty. Over this time, some families faced worsening conditions, or more often, years where conditions changed very little. There were some years when families experienced marginal improvement, and some lucky ones were lifted out of poverty. There were even a few years that saw dramatic improvement, with one year seeing up to half of all families lifted out of poverty. However, in these thirty-five years, there have always been children living in poverty despite the resolution to lift them all out of it. Progress was made when there was an increase in direct government investment for families, namely when the federal government created the Canada Child Benefit and when it significantly enhanced it. 2020 saw a historic low due to pandemic-related income interventions. These federal benefits, along with provincial contributions to income protection, successfully lower poverty and give children the best start in life.

For the second year in a row, however, we have seen historic year-over-year increases in child poverty since 1989. This is a troubling trend. The historic increases can only be partially attributed to the withdrawal of temporary income benefits, including those to offset the pandemic slowdowns and high inflation. Temporary and one-off cost of living payments by both the federal and provincial governments did not address the depth of poverty that exists here. More children have fallen into poverty because the root causes of poverty, including inadequate welfare



income, discriminatory barriers to employment security for their parents, and holes in the social safety net, were not fixed.

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## Swift action is needed for child and family wellbeing

The Nova Scotia Department of Community Services has a new framework that outlines a shift from speaking about “child welfare” to “child and family wellbeing,” to signal its support for prevention, early intervention, and family preservation rooted in community.<sup>3</sup> This shift itself is positive. However, we echo the concerns of the authors in the new CCPA-NS report on the child welfare system about these changes: “While these appear to be positive changes in principle, there are acute dangers when such discursive shifts are not accompanied by significant changes to the grossly inadequate material conditions whereby the needs of children, families, and child protection workers remain unmet.”<sup>4</sup>

Our report card subtitle underlines the need for an urgent shift away from the government’s stingy and targeted approach that fails to prevent poverty to *action* that prioritizes providing adequate direct support to families who know best how to safeguard their children’s wellbeing. The kind of transformation underway for child welfare, including for children in foster care, is in stark contrast to the reforms undertaken to “transform” government income support for those living in poverty. As antipoverty advocate, Stella Lord has said of the Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA) system transformation: “without equal and sustained attention to income adequacy in policies and programs along with more dignity and respect in case management processes, the ESIA systems character will not truly be transformed.”<sup>5</sup>

Notably, central to the provincial government’s fixing of the foster care system, foster families will now receive bi-weekly block payments with the desired objectives to provide “flexibility and autonomy to make child and family focused decisions around how to spend funding; rates that are adjusted annually based on inflation and are more reflective of the costs of living and raising a child in Nova Scotia.”<sup>6</sup> The biweekly amount provided to foster families is \$1,493 for the first child, \$3,060 for a child that needs specialized care, and \$4,264 for medicalized placement. We do not begrudge foster families this support, indeed we applaud it. However, the same government Department is responsible for keeping income assistance rates well below the poverty line, ensuring that families do not have what they need to raise their children. At the same time, the

Child and Family Services Act uses poverty as grounds for child neglect. Children apprehended for these reasons may live in a foster family who will now receive at a minimum (based on what the government themselves has deemed needed to raise a child) more than three times the amount a single parent with one child on income assistance (renting) would receive in a year (\$11,844). We do, thus, want to point out this hypocrisy and what appears to be bias against those families living in poverty, especially those who have turned to the government for support as a last resort to try and keep their families together. Families are being blamed for system neglect.

# Measuring poverty

**T**his report card provides the number and percentage of children living in poverty based on the most recent income-based statistics. This is the 2024 report card, which uses 2022 data. The data have a two-year lag time, which is the shortest time for the data to be cleaned, analyzed, and prepared for public use by Statistics Canada. There are no comprehensive data sets that are more up-to-date for measuring poverty. This report card analyses how the rates differ using many factors given available data.

Tax filer data provides limited demographic disaggregation, including for Indigenous people, on and off reserve, as well as by racialized and immigration status, and those with disabilities. We continue to include specific disaggregated demographic data from the national Census, which is only administered once every five years.<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, there is no reliable data on people with disabilities living in poverty in Nova Scotia, children with disabilities, families with children who have disabilities, or families where parents are dealing with disabilities. Campaign 2000 did release a poverty report card with Disability Without Poverty in 2023, which showed that people with disabilities are twice as likely to live in poverty as people without disabilities in Canada.<sup>8</sup> There is a need for more timely, robust, and disaggregated data collection on poverty and disabilities, particularly as it relates to families with children.

Appendix C provides an overview of the data sources and measures of poverty (including poverty line thresholds) and a list of key terms used

in this report card. There are a few critical points to understand about the data used.

First, the authors did not collect the data in this report card. The federal government collects the data using surveys done by Statistics Canada, such as the Canadian Income Survey and the Census or by analyzing data from income tax filing. The data are public, though not all are available via the Statistics Canada website. Some data was purchased from Statistics Canada by Campaign 2000, and the custom tabulation reference number is provided when relevant. The authors have prepared this report's figures, tables, and related calculations. Sources used to produce figures and tables are noted.

Second, this report primarily uses Statistics Canada's T1 Family File (T1FF) to report on low income for children (0-17 years of age), which is the most comprehensive data source covering 92.9 per cent of the Nova Scotia population in 2022. The Census Family After-Tax Low-Income Measure (CFLIM-AT) is used to calculate the poverty rate. The CFLIM-AT compares the income of a census family to the rest of the population of a similar family size. The CFLIM-AT is a relative measure of poverty that determines poverty thresholds set at 50 per cent of the median Canadian family income, which means a family is considered to have a low income if their income falls below the income amount that is positioned at the 25th percentile of all Canadian family incomes of the same size. Using tax filer data, this poverty measure is especially valuable because it allows for reporting on small communities within Nova Scotia.<sup>9</sup> The LIM is also the most recognized measure of poverty internationally, as it is the most strongly related to health status and developmental outcomes. UNICEF, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and the European Union use it. As UNICEF explains, this poverty rate captures: "the proportion of children who are to some significant extent excluded from the advantages and opportunities which most children in that particular society would consider normal."<sup>10</sup>

In 2018 the federal government adopted the Market Basket Measure (MBM) as Canada's official poverty measure.<sup>11</sup> The MBM is an absolute measure of material deprivation, which compares income to the cost of goods and services that would allow a family to meet their basic needs and have a modest standard of living.<sup>12</sup> Unlike the CFLIM-AT, a relative measure of poverty (capturing inequality) that compares income nationally, the MBM is sensitive to regional differences. When poverty rates are reported using the MBM annually, data from the *Canadian Income Survey* (CIS) is used as it is not possible to calculate the MBM poverty rate with tax filer data. The poverty thresholds for the CFLIM-

## Table 1 / Measures of child poverty

Age 0-17, Nova Scotia, 2022

	Poverty definition	
	CFLIM-AT	MBM*
Data source	T1 Family File	Canadian Income Survey
Poverty rate	23.8%	14.0%
Change from 2021	16.1 per cent increase	129.5 per cent increase
Number of children in poverty	41,550	24,000

\* Data quality D: acceptable

Sources CFLIM-AT data: Statistics Canada Table 11-10-0018-01, LIM-AT and MBM data: Canadian Income Survey Table: 11-10-0135-01

AT can be found in Table 8 in Appendix C and Table 9 for the MBM thresholds.

Table 1 highlights the different estimates of child poverty from each available measure for 2022, using the tax filer data and the CFLIM-AT and the Market Basket Measure using the Canadian Income Survey (CIS). **The child poverty rate using the MBM was 14 per cent (a 129.5 per cent increase). Using this measure and data, Nova Scotia has the highest rate recorded in the ten provinces.** The CFLIM-AT rate is 23.8 per cent, a 16.1 per cent increase. The differences can be partially attributed to the limitations of the MBM using the CIS.<sup>13</sup> The CIS is based on a small sample size and is susceptible to sampling error; the Atlantic provinces often return poor data quality ratings when reporting child poverty; however, for 2022, the data quality was acceptable. The CIS excludes people living on reserves, those living in congregate settings, and very remote and rural communities. These exclusions may result in an underestimation of poverty.

The number of low-income children in Nova Scotia reported by these two poverty measures in 2022 was 41,550 (LIM) and 24,000 (MBM), respectively. According to the MBM, 17,550 children would not be considered to be living in poverty. However, the LIM measurement tells us these children would still be experiencing the harms and adverse outcomes of poverty. Those designing policies and programs must ensure that their welfare is also addressed.

Finally, income measures of poverty do not reflect the complexity of poverty and well-being experienced by any community, particularly for Indigenous communities. As outlined in the First Nations Poverty Action Research Project report, the First Nations communities involved “rejected

the concept of poverty as defined in the mainstream society with an emphasis on income, employment and related measures. Instead, they approached the task from a much wider, holistic perspective, seeking to achieve the good life, one that included dimensions such as spiritual, mental, emotional and physical health and well-being; that stressed the idea of balance and harmony among the dimensions, and that showed a preference for “building our community together” rather than focusing on a disadvantaged subset of the community.” Indeed, “poverty was not a concept with which they felt comfortable, and indeed there is no term in Indigenous languages to express this idea.”<sup>14</sup>

# Tracking child poverty 1989-2022

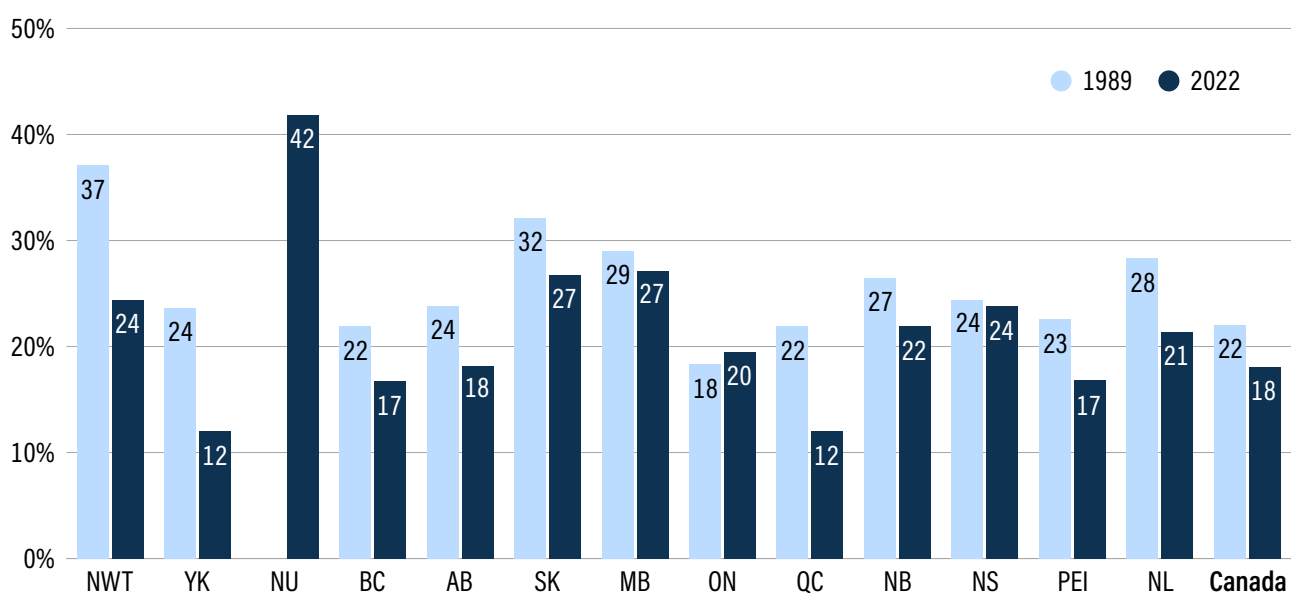
**O**n November 24th, 1989, a motion was passed in the House of Commons to **eliminate poverty among Canadian children by the year 2000**. In 1989, the child poverty rate in Nova Scotia was 24.4 per cent (56,960 children) as measured by the Census Family After-Tax Low-Income Measure (CFLIM-AT). The incidence of child poverty in Nova Scotia in 2000 was worse than in 1989 despite the promise of eradication. In 2000, 27.8 per cent of Nova Scotia children, or more than one in four (58,730 children), were living in poverty, signifying a failure of government action.

The child poverty rate in 2020 and 2021 were the lowest since 1989. This was due to COVID-19-related government income transfers to families, primarily in 2020, with some extending in 2021. Unfortunately, this intervention was only temporary. After the largest single-year reduction of child poverty in 2020, the child poverty rate rose again in Nova Scotia in 2021 and again in 2022. **In fact, the 16.1 per cent increase between 2021 and 2022 was the highest single-year increase since 1989. In 2022, 41,550 children lived in low-income families, or more than one in five children in Nova Scotia.**

*Figure 1* shows the overall change in child poverty rates between 1989 and 2022 in each province and territory in Canada. In 1989, Nova Scotia had the fifth-highest percentage of low-income children (third highest among only provinces). In 2022, **Nova Scotia still had the fifth-highest child poverty rate in Canada compared to other provinces and territories.** Nova Scotia's ranking in Canada has been consistent

**Figure 1 / Child poverty rate by province and territory, 1989 and 2022**

Age 0-17, CFLIM-AT



Source: Statistics Canada custom tabulation for the year 1989, T1 Family Files, 2022

over the last several years, consistently ranking fourth or fifth. **It has also consistently had the highest rate in Atlantic Canada.**

Between 1989 and 2022, the child poverty rates decreased in every province and territory. **Nova Scotia has performed the second worst in reducing child poverty from 1989 levels (reducing it by only 2.5 per cent).** Only Ontario performed worse than Nova Scotia and was the only province with an increase from 1989 levels. However, Ontario has consistently had a lower child poverty rate than Nova Scotia across this time frame. (Notably, there is no 1989 data for Nunavut.)

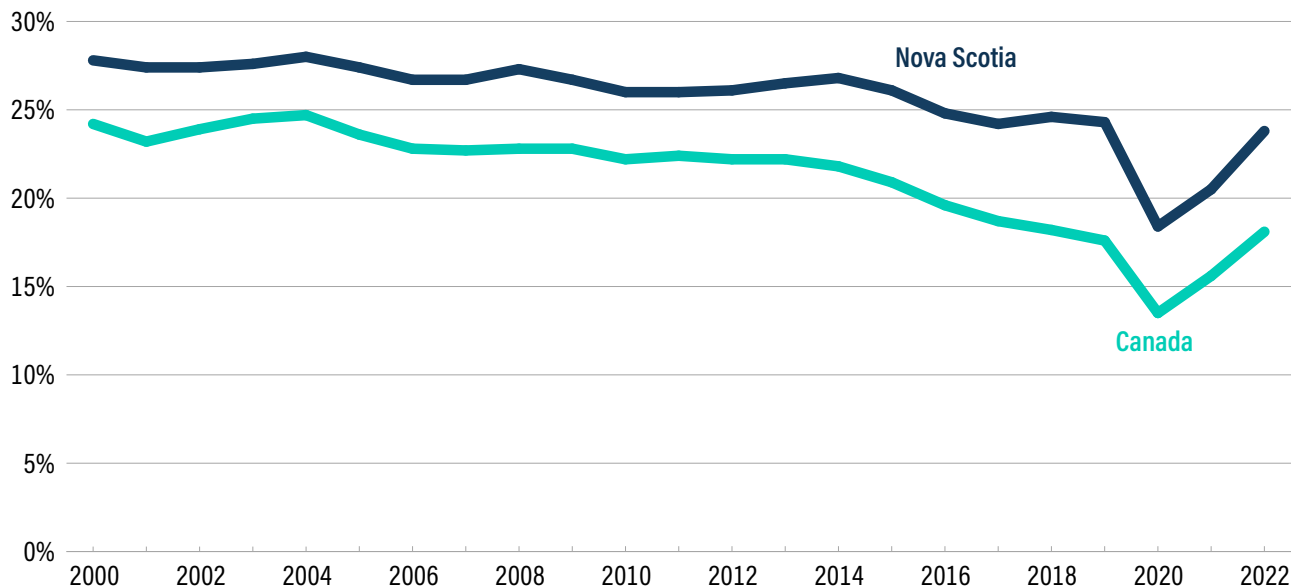
*Figure 2* shows the trend of child poverty rates in Nova Scotia and Canada since the year 2000. The highest child poverty rate in Nova Scotia (28 per cent) and Canada (24.7 per cent) occurred in 2004. In Canada, the overall trend of child poverty declines after 2004, with periods of little change or slight increases. Since 2014, there has been another downward trend in child poverty in Canada, with the most dramatic drop in 2020 due to pandemic income support.

To some extent, the trend in Nova Scotia mirrors the national trend; however, child poverty rates have persistently been higher here and have not steadily tracked downward in the same way. Between 2017 and 2019,



**Figure 2 / Child poverty rates of Nova Scotia and Canada, 2000-22**

CFLIM-AT



Source: Statistics Canada, T1 Family Files, 2000-22

while Nova Scotia had a higher rate of poverty than the Canadian rate, there was a widening difference (from 5 per cent to now 6.7 per cent higher). Like the rest of Canada, there was a dramatic drop in child poverty in Nova Scotia in 2020. The Nova Scotia rate increased in both 2021 and 2022, as it did in provinces and territories across Canada. Child poverty in 2022 in Nova Scotia is still slightly lower than in 2019 (24.3 per cent), indicating that we have returned to the higher rates of child poverty that existed pre-pandemic.

Data from tax filers demonstrates that Nova Scotia's child poverty rate remains high compared to the rest of Canada, and the province has performed relatively poorly in reducing child poverty.

# Child poverty across Nova Scotia

Poverty is uneven across geographic communities. While poverty rates tend to be higher in urban areas of Canada due to higher costs of living, disaggregated poverty data by small geographies reveals that both rural and urban areas experience high rates of poverty in Nova Scotia. Nova Scotia, among Canada's most rural provinces, has the highest rates of child poverty in rural geographies, reaching well over 50 per cent in some communities.

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## Child poverty by Census Division

Table 2 shows the differences based on Statistics Canada's Census Divisions in Nova Scotia. The lowest rates of child poverty are in Antigonish (19.6 per cent) and Halifax (20.1 per cent). The child poverty rates are highest in Digby (36.1 per cent), Annapolis (34.4 per cent), Cape Breton (32.4 per cent), and Queens (31.5 per cent). All Census Divisions in Nova Scotia saw increases in child poverty since 2021. Shelburne, Digby, and Annapolis saw the largest increases in child poverty from 2021 levels.

**Table 2 / Child poverty by Census Division**

Rate, number, and per cent change from previous year, in 2022

Census Division	Child poverty rate	Number of low-income children	Change from 2021
Annapolis	34.4%	1120	32.3%
Antigonish	19.6%	750	7.1%
Cape Breton	32.4%	5510	17.4%
Colchester	24.7%	2320	17.6%
Cumberland	30.1%	1530	15.3%
Digby	36.1%	960	32.7%
Guysborough	28.3%	300	21.5%
Halifax	20.1%	16250	14.2%
Hants	23.0%	2270	12.2%
Inverness	24.4%	730	18.4%
Kings	23.0%	2660	16.8%
Lunenburg	23.9%	1810	12.7%
Pictou	26.1%	2110	20.3%
Queens	31.5%	510	10.5%
Richmond	26.4%	390	10.0%
Shelburne	29.0%	710	43.6%
Victoria	26.5%	360	9.1%
Yarmouth	28.0%	1250	15.2%

Source Statistics Canada, Income Statistics Division, T1 Family File, 2022

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## Child poverty in federal ridings

Nova Scotia's capacity to fund social programs largely depends on cost-sharing arrangements with the federal government. Reducing poverty requires leadership from all levels of government. Table 3 shows child poverty rates by federal electoral boundaries. All federal ridings in Nova Scotia saw increases in child poverty since 2021—the largest percentage change in West Nova (25.3 per cent increase). In 2022, the Sydney-Victoria riding had a child poverty rate of 33.9 per cent, the 11<sup>th</sup> highest rate for federal electoral districts in Canada. Four additional ridings (West Nova, Halifax, Cumberland-Colchester, Cape Breton-Canso, and Central Nova) have rates that are represented in the highest quintile of child poverty rates nationally. Contrasting the rates in Nova Scotia to those nationally, the riding of Portneuf-Jacques-Cartier in Quebec had the lowest rate, with 5.1% of children living in poverty in 2022 and no change since 2021.<sup>15</sup>

**Table 3 / Child poverty by federal electoral district**

Rate, number, and per cent change from previous year, in 2022

Electoral district	Child poverty rate	Number of low-income children	Change from 2021
Cape Breton-Canso	25.9%	3140	15.6%
Central Nova	24.4%	2950	18.4%
Cumberland-Colchester	26.6%	3850	16.7%
Dartmouth-Cole Harbour	20.8%	3620	14.5%
Halifax	27.3%	4180	13.8%
Halifax West	20.8%	4790	14.3%
Kings-Hants	23.0%	3900	12.2%
Sackville-Preston-Chezzetcook	14.7%	2880	17.6%
South Shore-St.Margarets	22.3%	3510	16.1%
Sydney-Victoria	33.9%	4380	16.5%
West Nova	29.2%	4360	25.3%

Source Statistics Canada, Income Statistics Division, T1 Family File, 2022

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## Child poverty rates by postal area

Appendix A (Table 6) provides available child poverty numbers and rates by Nova Scotia postal areas (cities and rural routes). These data show stark differences in child poverty between areas throughout Nova Scotia, which are hidden when poverty rates are calculated as provincial or regional aggregates (Census Divisions/Federal Electoral Districts). This geographic data reinforces that there are high rates of child poverty in both rural and urban areas of the province.

**One-third of the listed postal areas in Table 6 have child poverty rates of 30 per cent and higher.** The range of rates is quite significant, from a low of 3.7 per cent in Upper Tantallon to a high of 66.7 per cent in North Preston—both parts of the Halifax Regional Municipality.

There were substantial increases in child poverty rates between 2021 and 2022, notably in some rural communities in Western Nova Scotia; Meadowvale (99.5 per cent increase), Wilmot (88.5 per cent increase), Barrington (80.5 per cent increase), Sandy Point (69 per cent increase), Church Point (67.4 per cent increase), and Bear River (63.1 per cent increase).

It should also be noted that postal cities for urban areas of the province (Halifax, Dartmouth, and Sydney) reported in Appendix A (Table 7) are aggregates of several smaller postal units (Forward Sortation Areas

[FSA]. Such aggregates disguise higher child poverty rates in certain areas of urban Nova Scotia. For example, FSAs (Appendix B) within the Halifax postal city, range from 17.6 per cent (B3P codes—Bedford) to a high of 41.9 per cent in Spryfield (B3J codes) and 41 per cent in downtown Halifax (B3J codes). Similarly, rates range in the Dartmouth postal city from 21.6 per cent (B2X codes—Bounded by Lake Charles/Micmac/Topsail) to 32.4 per cent (B3A codes—North Dartmouth/Harbourview/Highfield Park/Albro Lake/Crichton Park neighbourhoods). Sydney (North) had a child poverty rate of 41.5 per cent compared to 16.2 per cent in Sydney (West).

The Halifax Regional Municipality data illustrates how much geography matters and the importance of clarity on the geographic boundaries being reported. For example, the child poverty rate in the Halifax CMA is 20.1 per cent, but the federal riding also named Halifax is 27.3 per cent. The latter is a smaller geography, including different communities with higher poverty rates while excluding some with the lowest. The postal city of Halifax shows a rate of 28.9%, but we know the rate for communities within it varies. It is thus important to consider for what purposes you are using geographic boundaries and be clear on how policies and programs reach people depending on where they live.

# Child poverty for different children

**S**ome families with children face higher risks of poverty and greater depths of poverty compared to others because they have been made vulnerable and marginalized because of who they are, because of their race, immigration status, Indigeneity, disabilities, gender, and sexuality. The only data source that captures child poverty rates disaggregated for different groups of children is the 2021 Canadian Census. Thus, the most recent applicable data reports 2020 incomes, when child poverty was at an all-time low. But even this low was not experienced uniformly.

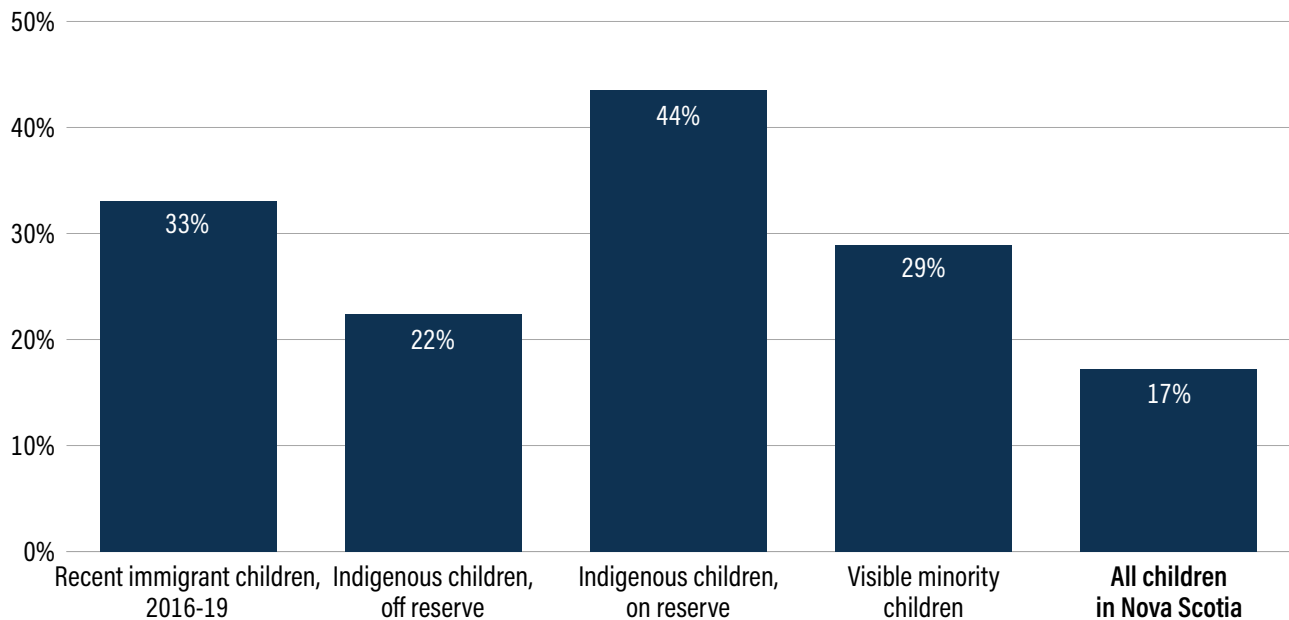
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## Racialized, immigrant, and Indigenous children

Figure 3 reports Census data that shows higher rates of poverty for racialized, immigrant and Indigenous children living on and off reserve. While the child poverty rate in Nova Scotia based on the same Census data for all children using the LIM-AT was 17.2 per cent, 28.9 per cent of racialized children were low-income. Census data also shows higher rates of low-income among new immigrant children (33.1 per cent) compared to non-immigrant children (15.9 per cent) and higher rates for on-reserve Indigenous children (43.5 per cent) and off-reserve (22.4 per cent) compared to non-Indigenous children (16.5 per cent).

### Figure 3 / Child poverty rate by different groups

LIM-AT, Nova Scotia, 2020 (based on 2021 Census)



Source Statistics Canada—2021 Census. Tables 98-10-0314-01 and 98-10-0332-01, and Custom Tabulation, R23083

It is not possible to disaggregate tax filers by groups of children because socio-demographic questions are not asked on tax returns. However, patterns of higher child poverty rates are evident in postal geographies where **census profiles for communities indicate higher populations of African Nova Scotians**. For example, the child poverty rate in North Preston (postal city) in 2022 was 66.7 per cent and East Preston (40.9 per cent), and both have been rising since 2020. The Rural Route B0V1A0 (Bay View/Digby) community had a child poverty rate of 41 per cent, and the FSA postal codes B3K (Halifax North End) 34.9 per cent.

While 2021 census data shows that the child poverty rate for on-reserve Indigenous children was 43.5 per cent overall, tax filer data from 2022 reported in Appendix A shows rates higher in some reserve communities, notably 73.7 per cent in Wagmatcook and 64.5 per cent in Eskasoni.

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## Poverty and disabilities

There is no recent data on the number of children with disabilities living in poverty. However, people with disabilities in Canada are twice as likely to live in poverty as people without disabilities.<sup>16</sup> Nova Scotia has the second lowest welfare income for an unattached single person living with disabilities (\$12 687/year).<sup>17</sup> The Canadian Survey on Disabilities (2022) reported that Nova Scotia had the highest proportion of people with disabilities (37.9%) for those 15 years and older in Canada.<sup>18</sup> These data show that, overall, those with disabilities have lower incomes than those without disabilities across Canada. The median income for people with disabilities in Nova Scotia in 2022 (15 years and older) was \$34,919 compared to \$42,000 for those without a disability and is lower for those with more severe disabilities.

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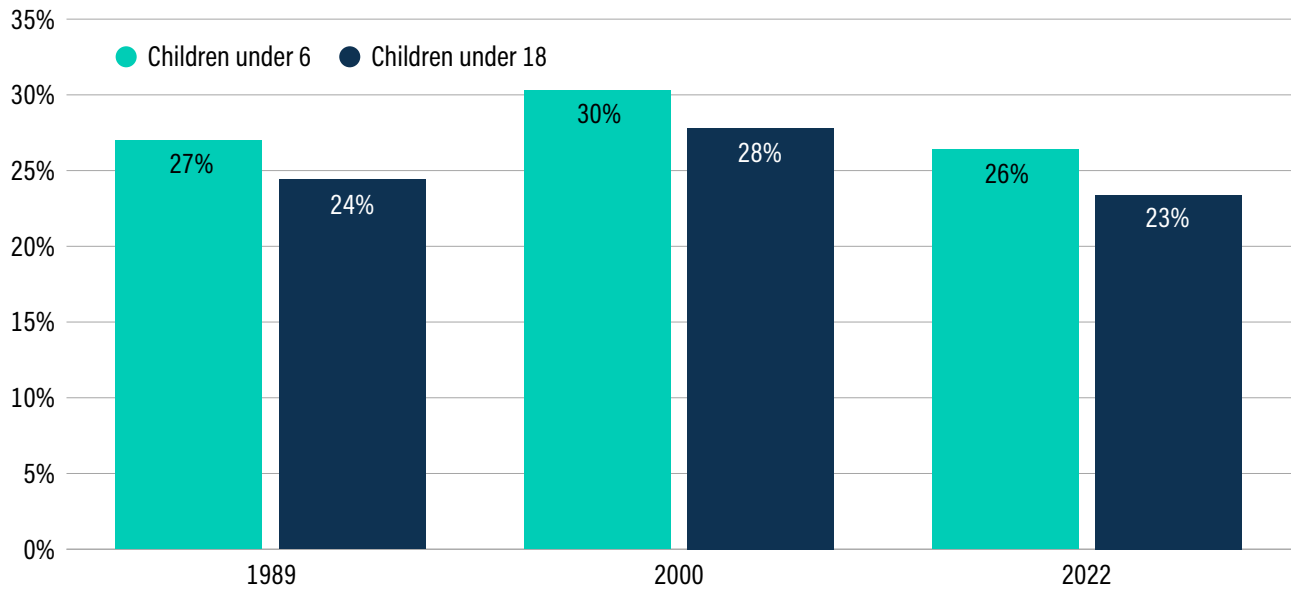
## Poverty and young children

Figure 4 shows the child poverty rate for children under six in 1989, 2000, and 2022. It demonstrates that **poverty rates for younger Nova Scotian children were higher in all three years** than they were for all children under 18. In 2022, the child poverty rate for children under 6 was 26.4 per cent, more than one in four young children, compared to 23.4 per cent of all children.



**Figure 4 / Child poverty rate for children under 6 compared to all children, 1989, 2000, and 2022**

CFLIM-AT, Nova Scotia



**Source** Statistics Canada—2021 Census. Tables 98-10-0314-01 and 98-10-0332-01, and Custom Tabulation, R23083

# Child poverty for different families

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## Family type

Figure 5 shows that children living in one-parent families experience a much greater likelihood of living in poverty than children living in couple families. In 2022, 50.4 per cent of the children living in lone parent families in Nova Scotia lived below the CFLIM-AT (25,680 children) compared with 11.9 per cent of children living in couple families (14,590 children). The rate of child poverty in lone parent families has increased by 12 per cent since 2021 (when it was 45 per cent).

The 2021 Census (which reports 2020 income data) tell us that child poverty is lowest among children with two parents. Eighty-five percent of lone-parent families are mother-led, and mother-led families had higher rates of child poverty than father-led families (37.8 per cent versus 28.7 per cent, representing 13,880 and 2,310 children, respectively). This is a significant difference underscoring **the gendered nature of poverty**.<sup>19</sup>

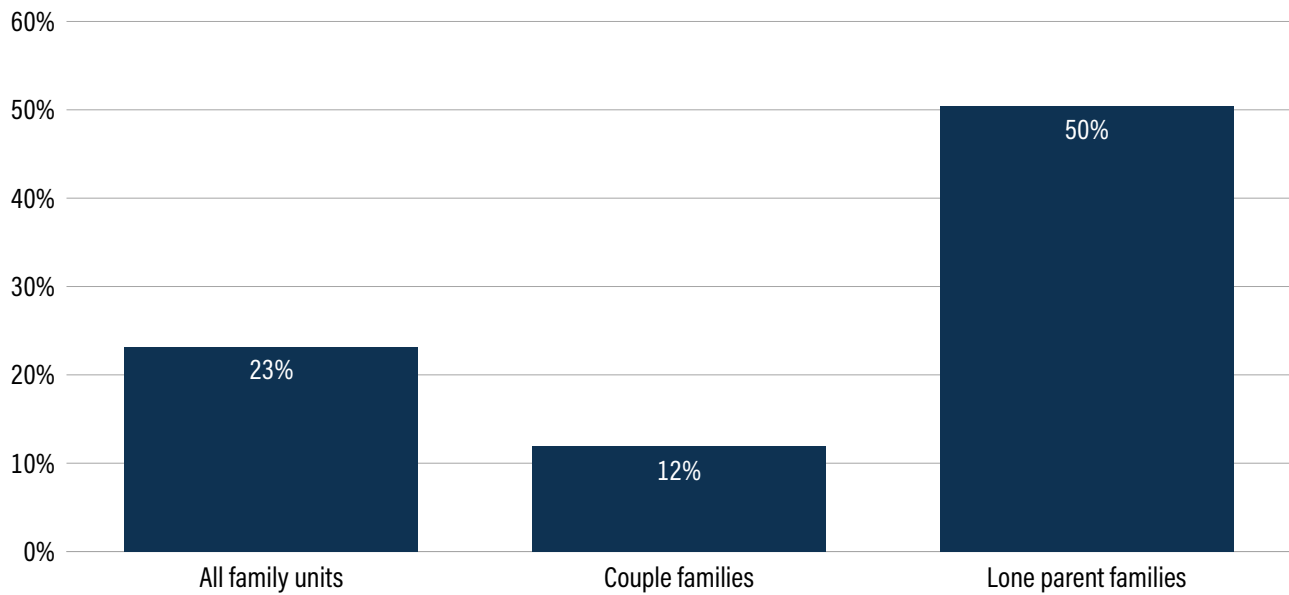
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## Child poverty by family size

Nova Scotia children living in larger families also have higher rates of poverty. Figure 6 shows that the poverty rate for children in all low-income families with three or more children was 29.1 per cent, compared to 24.1 per cent for families with only one child and 18.1 per cent for

## Figure 5 / Child poverty rate by family type

CFLIM-AT, Nova Scotia, 2022

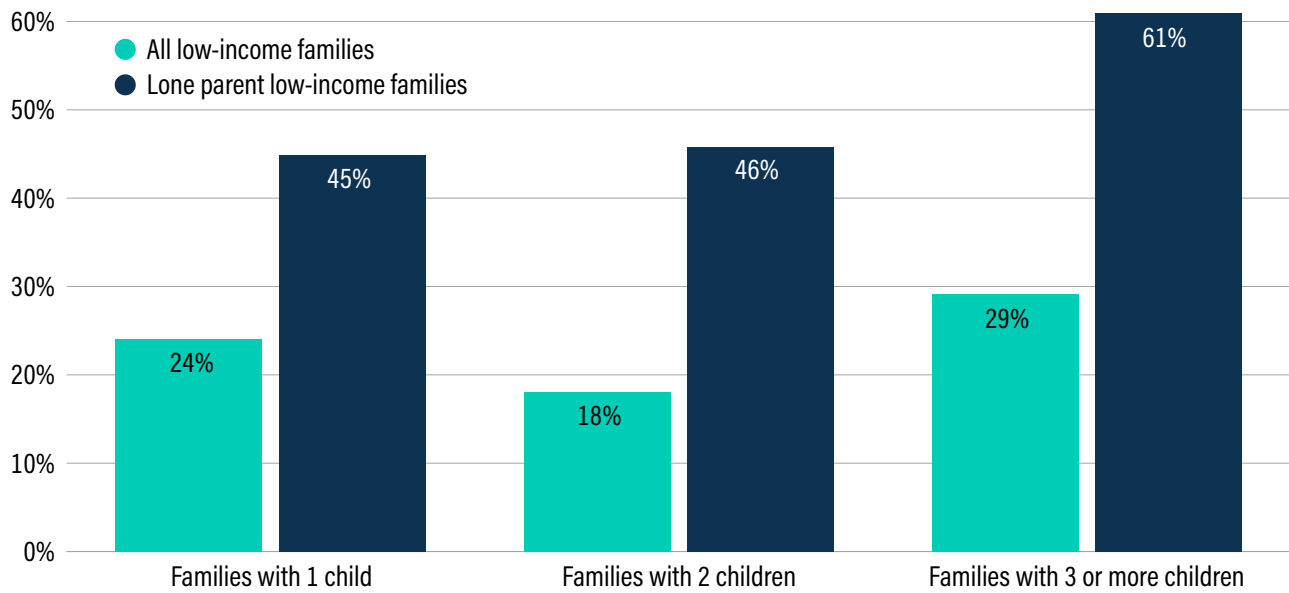


**Source** Statistics Canada—2021 Census. Tables 98-10-0314-01 and 98-10-0332-01, and Custom Tabulation, R23083

families with two children. For lone-parent families, the child poverty rate rose with each additional child (44.9 per cent in families with one child, 45.8 per cent for families with two children, and 60.9 per cent in lone-parent families with three or more).

## Figure 6 / Child poverty rate by family size

AT-LIM, Nova Scotia, 2022



Source Statistics Canada, Income Statistics Division, T1 Family File, 2022

# Income inequality of families with children

Income inequality refers to the uneven distribution of income in a society. High levels of inequality are reported to lead to weaker social relationships, increased health disparities, decreased life satisfaction, improved mental conditions, and more disengaged youth.<sup>20</sup> UNICEF tracks income inequality as one marker of child wellbeing because it sustains or increases gaps in children's ability to participate in opportunities considered normal to that society.<sup>21</sup>

Comparing the median income of the wealthiest 10% of families with middle and low-income families shows an inequality gap. Table 4 details the average incomes in 2022 of the wealthiest families in Nova Scotia with children under 18 (\$214,322/year) compared to the average income of the lowest-income families (\$13,725/year). Families in the middle decile had an average income of \$72,987.

Figure 7 shows that families with children in the highest decile held 23.9 per cent share of after-tax income while the share of total income of the bottom 50% of families combined was 25.7 per cent. Families with children in the lowest decile held 1.5 per cent of after-tax income. In 2022, **the after-tax average income for Nova Scotia families with children in the top decile was more than 15 times higher than the average income in the bottom 10%.**

**Table 4 / Average income for Nova Scotia families with children under 18**

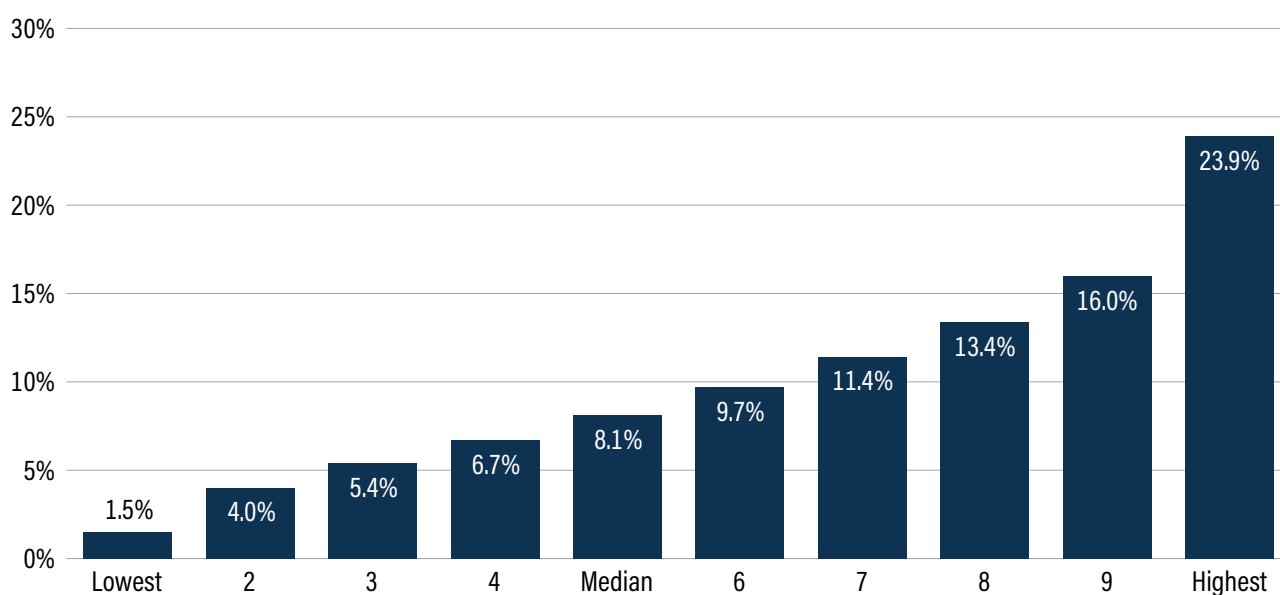
Highest, median and lowest decile by family type, after tax, 2022

Families with children under 18	Lowest decile	Median (5th decile)	Highest decile
All census families	\$13,725	\$72,987	\$214,322
Couple families	\$30,199	\$95,650	\$235,267
All lone-parent families	\$6,332	\$40,341	\$100,000
Male lone-parent families	\$1,626	\$44,071	\$118,606
Female lone-parent families	\$7,060	\$39,883	\$92,501

Source Statistics Canada. (2024). T1 Family File, Custom Tabulation. R23083

**Figure 7 / Distribution of income for Nova Scotia families with children under 18**

Percent share after tax, by decile, 2022



Source Statistics Canada. (2024). T1 Family File, Custom Tabulation. R23083

Table 4 also shows that lone parent families had a substantively lower average income than couple families, accounting for the decreased potential additional earner. While there were considerably fewer father-led lone parent families than mother-led lone parent families in Nova Scotia in 2022 (4090 compared to 26,990, respectively), those in the lowest income decline had lower average incomes than mother-led lone parent families. Mother-led lone parent families in the fifth decile and in

the highest decile had lower average incomes than father-led lone parent families in those deciles.

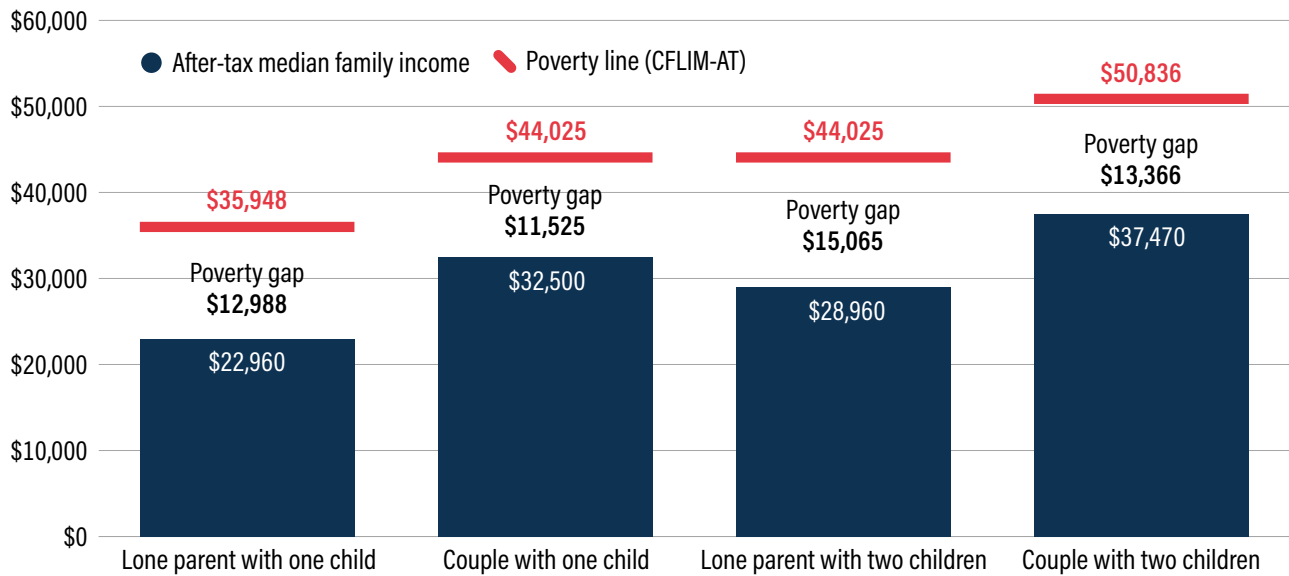
# Depth of poverty

**D**epth of poverty refers to how far below a poverty threshold incomes fall. Figure 8 shows that many low-income families live far below the CFLIM-AT poverty threshold. The after-tax median incomes from all income sources of low-income families of differing sizes were significantly below the CFLIM-AT in 2022. For example, low-income couple families with two children in Nova Scotia had a median income of \$37,470. This income was \$13,366 below the CFLIM-AT poverty line (only 73 per cent of the poverty threshold). These families would need an extra \$1,114/month to meet the poverty line. Lone-parent families with one child and lone-parent families with two children had median incomes below the poverty line by \$12,988 and \$15,065, respectively. Lone-parent, two-child families would need an extra \$1,255/month to bring them to the CFLIM-AT poverty threshold. The shortfall of incomes needed to reach the poverty line (based on the median income of low-income households) has increased since 2021 in all these family types, as displayed in Figure 8.



## Figure 8 / Poverty gap by family type and size

Income compared with poverty line for families in Nova Scotia  
with income below the CFLIM-AT, 2022



**Source** Statistics Canada Table 11-10-0018-01. After-tax income status of tax filers and dependents based on Census Family Low Income Measure (CFLIM-AT), by family type and family type composition, 2022. Median income: T1FF, Table 11-10-0020-01.

# Government transfers' effect on poverty

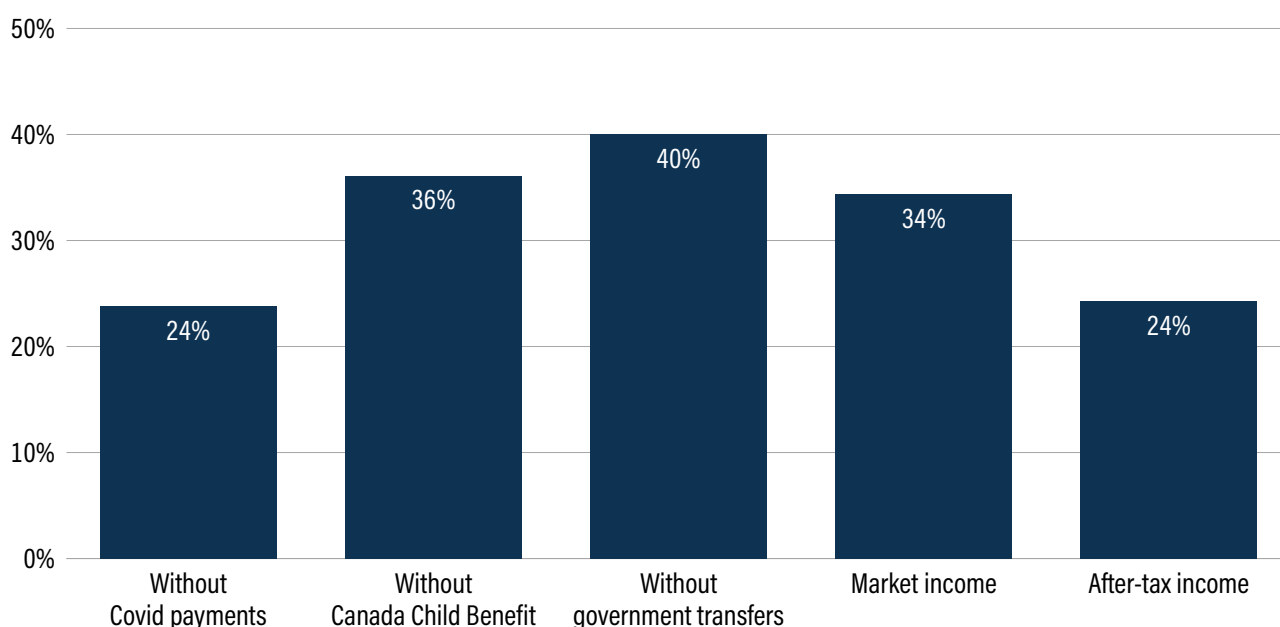
**M**arket income alone, comprised of employment (including self-employment) and income generated from investment and pension, leaves many families and children with low income. Figure 9 shows that the child poverty rate based on market income alone would be 36.1 per cent in Nova Scotia. Government income benefits to individuals and families in 2022 effectively prevented 28,320 children from poverty (40.5 per cent reduction). Both the federal and provincial governments deliver these benefits. They include children's benefits and benefits to other family members (Canada Child Benefit, the NS Child Benefit, the Goods and Services Tax Credit, the Working Income Tax Benefit, Employment Insurance, Income Assistance, and the Nova Scotia Affordable Living Tax Credit). Without any of these transfers, 40 per cent of children would have been living in poverty in 2022 (69,870 children).

During 2020, to a lesser extent in 2021, and ending entirely in May 2022, federal, provincial and territorial governments implemented a wide range of new and enhanced income supports to help people temporarily because of the pandemic. These remaining temporary benefits had a minimal effect of lowering child poverty in 2022 by only 2 per cent.

Governments also provided additional support because of the rising cost of living pressures. The federal government delivered automatic cost-of-living payments for GST credit recipients, which would have

## Figure 9 / Impact of government transfers on child poverty rate

Age 0-17, CFLIM-AT, Nova Scotia, 2022



Source: Statistic Canada (2024), T1 Family File, 2022, Custom Tabulation, R23083

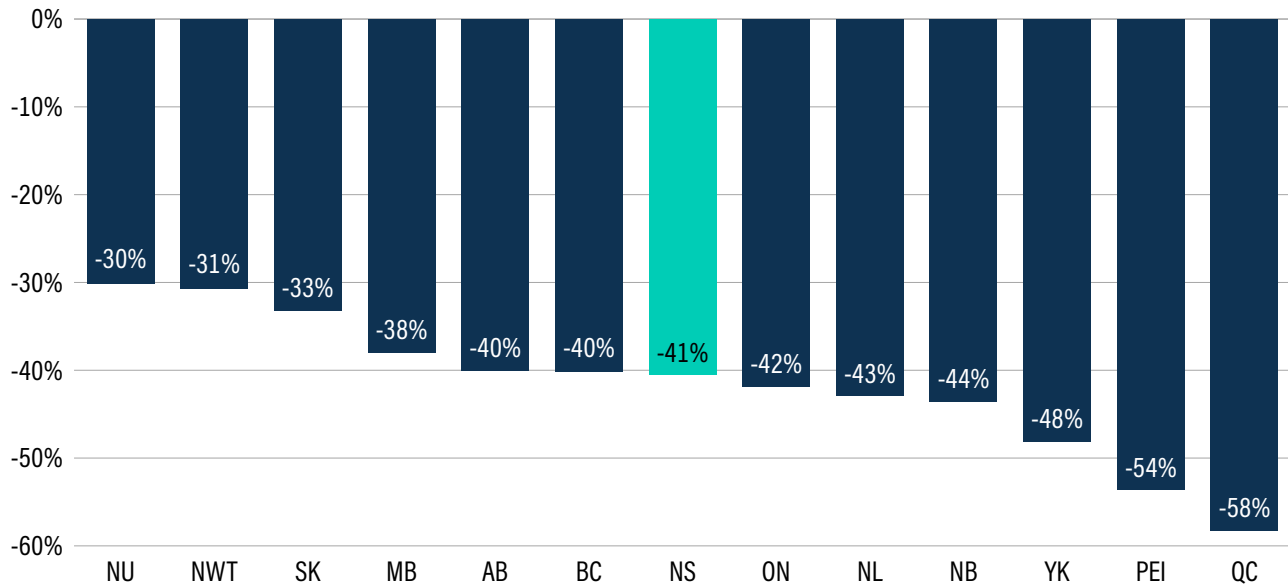
meant an extra \$467 for a couple with two children.<sup>22</sup> Additionally, the federal government implemented the Canada Child Benefit Young Child Supplement (CCBYCS), a quarterly top-up for families with children under six years of age receiving the CCB. Eligible families could receive a maximum of \$1,200 per child under six. While additional payments offered one-time relief for low-income families struggling with inflation, they did little to close the poverty gap.

Figure 9 also shows that the child poverty rate in Nova Scotia would have been 34.4 per cent (instead of 23.8 per cent) without the Canada Child Benefit (CCB), reducing child poverty by 30.8 per cent. The federal CCB alone prevented 18,450 children from living in poverty, and this intervention is responsible for 65 per cent of the total reduction of child poverty due to government income transfers. However, the effectiveness of the CCB has lost ground since 2021, when it was responsible for reducing child poverty by 37.3 per cent.

In 2022, all provinces' total government transfers were less effective in lowering child poverty rates than in 2021. Last year's report card<sup>23</sup> showed that these transfers decreased poverty by 50.5 per cent in Nova Scotia

**Figure 10 / Reduction in child poverty due to government income supports by province and territory**

CFLIM-AT, 2022



**Source** Statistic Canada (2024), T1 Family File, 2022, Custom Tabulation, R23083

in 2021 and lifted just over 36,000 children out of poverty. Government transfers prevented 28,320 children from poverty (40.5 per cent reduction) in 2022. Figure 10 shows the percentage reduction of child poverty in each province and territory due to total government transfers (federal and provincial). Six provinces/territories were more effective in reducing child poverty than Nova Scotia. Nova Scotia's poverty reduction was the least effective in the Atlantic provinces.

# Food and housing insecurity

Food insecurity, defined as a lack of access to food because of financial constraints,<sup>24</sup> is argued to be a more sensitive measure of material deprivation than income.<sup>25</sup> While low income is the strongest predictor of food insecurity, other factors that create financial constraints within households, such as debt payments, budget shocks (i.e., spikes in energy and other basic needs costs, emergencies), or having few protective assets,<sup>26</sup> can lead to food insecurity.

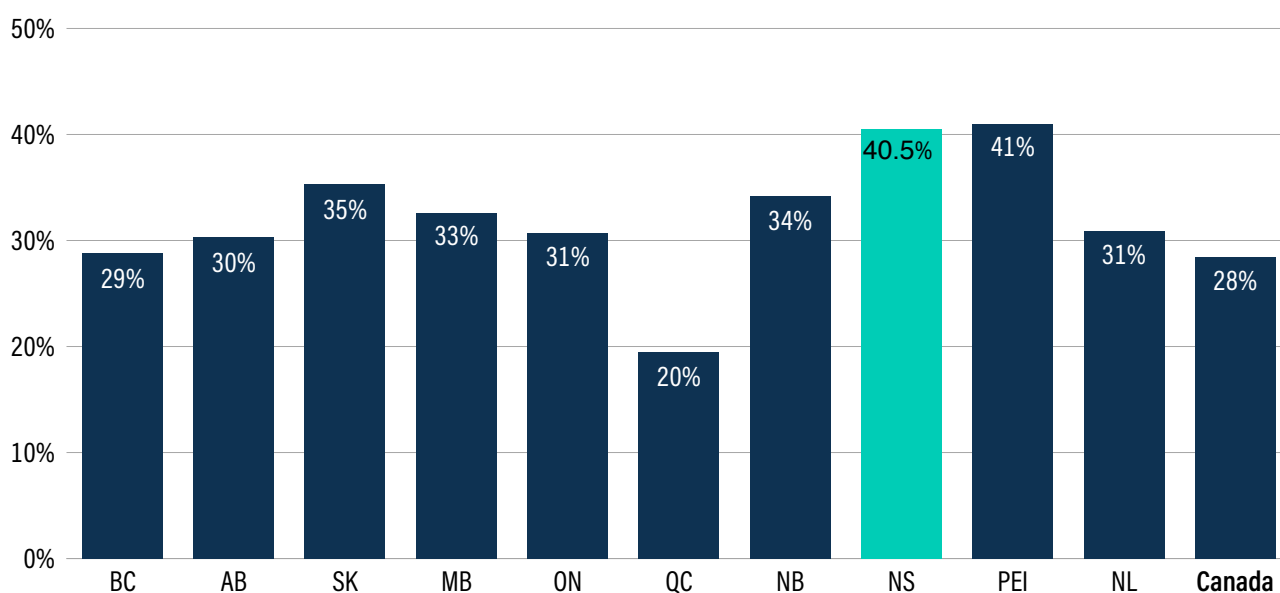
Figure 11 shows the percentage of childhood food insecurity (0-17 years) in the ten provinces based on the 2022 Canadian Income Survey (data collected in early 2023).<sup>27</sup> Nova Scotia has the second highest rate in Canada (40.5 per cent) after Prince Edward Island (41 per cent). Notably, these numbers would exclude on-reserve children.

Figure 12 shows the prevalence of childhood food insecurity in Nova Scotia from 2019 to 2022. The prevalence has been steadily rising, reaching 71,000 children.

As with child poverty rates, food insecurity prevalence varies and is higher for those who are marginalized. Between 2021 and 2022 in Nova Scotia, there was a 28.7 per cent increase in the prevalence of all children living in households experiencing food insecurity (from 31.4 per cent to 40.5 per cent). In 2022, lower rates of childhood food insecurity were found in non-racialized households (27.6 per cent) and non-Indigenous households (28.3 per cent) compared to all households.<sup>28</sup> Among children, food insecurity prevalence also varied by gender, whereby boys/

**Figure 11 / Children under 18 living in food-insecure households by province**

2023

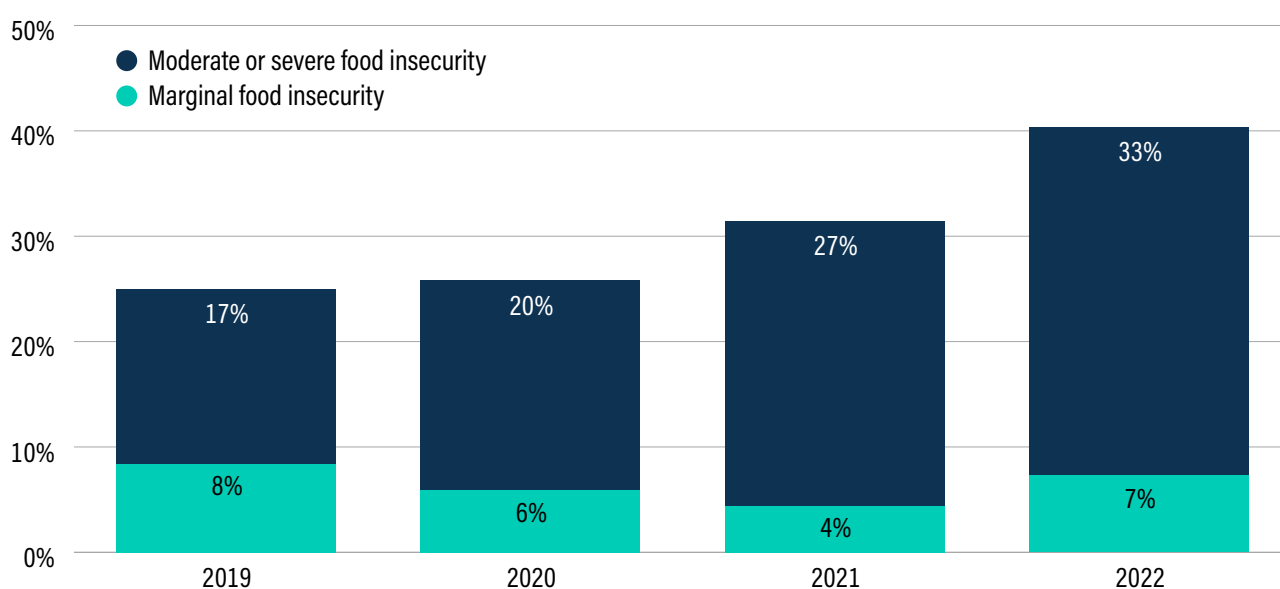


**Note** CIS interviews which collect food insecurity data are completed in the calendar year after the survey reference year

**Source** Canadian Income Survey (CIS) 2022. Statistics Canada Table 13-10-0835-01

**Figure 12 / Children under 18 living in food-insecure households, 2019-22**

Canadian Income Survey, Nova Scotia



**Source** Canadian Income Survey, Table: 13-10-0835-01

**Note** The 2022 Canadian Income Survey reflects food insecurity rates in 2023 because CIS interviews, which collect food insecurity data, are completed in the calendar year after the survey reference year.

men under 18 had a food insecurity rate of 42.6 per cent compared to 38.2 per cent of girls/women.

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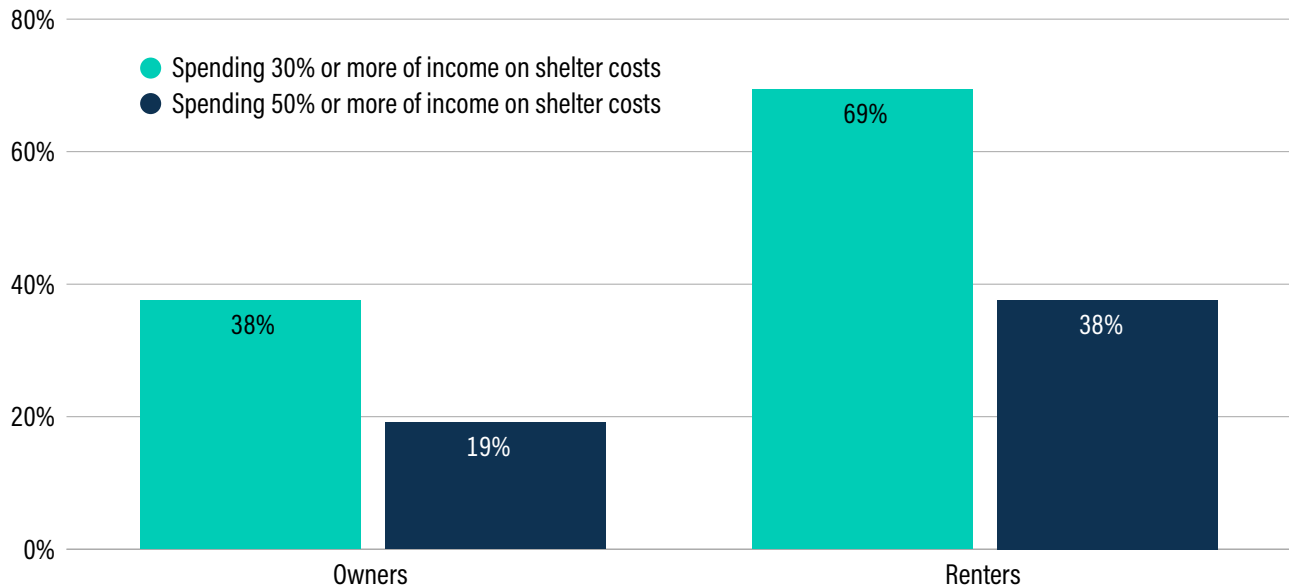
## Housing insecurity and children in Nova Scotia

Low-income status increases the risk of food insecurity and also makes affording housing a challenge. In fact, food and housing insecurities are interconnected, whereby those living in unaffordable housing often compromise their food purchasing. Figure 13 shows that close to 70 per cent of low-income Census families that rent in Nova Scotia pay more than 30 per cent of their income on housing costs, and 37.6 per cent pay 50 per cent or more (those spending 50 per cent or more on shelter are in severe housing need based on affordability). For low-income homeowners, 37.5 per cent spend more than 30 per cent on housing costs, and 19.1 per cent spend more than 50 per cent of income.

Being in core housing need means that a family's housing is considered unaffordable, unsuitable, inadequate, or a combination of these factors. Housing is unaffordable if it costs 30 per cent or more of the household's income, unsuitable if there are not enough rooms for the number of people in the home, and inadequate if it needs major repairs. Figure 14 shows that 12.9 per cent of Nova Scotian households were in core housing need in 2022 (54,000 households). Not shown is that Nova Scotia has the third highest rate of households in core housing need in the ten provinces, next to Ontario (14.5 per cent) and British Columbia (16.0 per cent). Core housing rates vary by the size of population centres, with rates lower in rural areas; however, tenure matters. The core housing need rate for rental households in rural Nova Scotia was 29 per cent in 2022 (the second highest in Canada next to Alberta (35.0 per cent)).

**Figure 13 / Comparing housing unaffordability for owners and renters in low-income family**

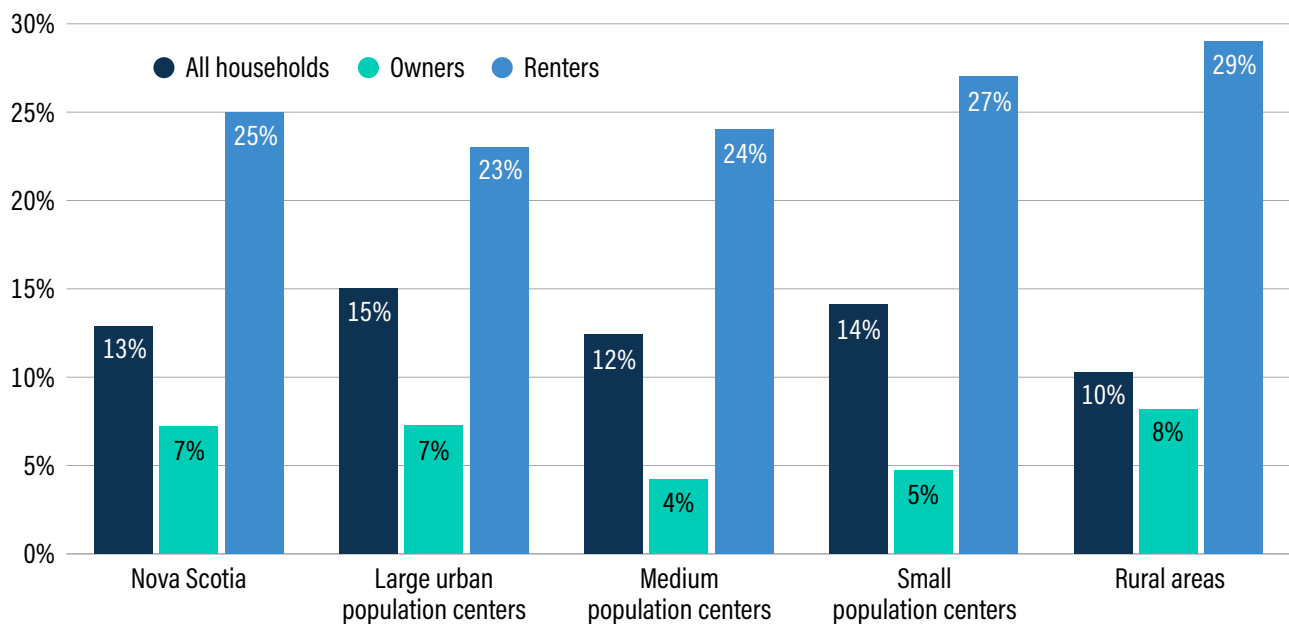
By low income census family, LIM-AT, Nova Scotia, Census 2021



Source: Census 2021, Custom order, R23083

**Figure 14 / Nova Scotia households in core housing need by community size**

Canadian Housing Survey, 2022



Source: Statistics Canada. Table 46-10-0085-01. Core housing need,<sup>29</sup> by tenure including first-time homebuyers and social and affordable housing status.



# A roadmap to ending child poverty in Nova Scotia

**W**hile most of this report card focuses on income poverty, the roadmap would be incomplete if it only addressed the causes of income inequality and insecurity. This roadmap also considers how to address other forms of insecurity, including food, housing, and care, which underscore the need to address the full consequences and experiences of poverty.

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## A poverty elimination plan

The Nova Scotia government should develop a poverty elimination plan based on principles in the social policy framework published by CCPA-NS and the NS College of Social Workers.<sup>30</sup> A poverty elimination strategy must be evidence-based, employ an intersectional lens, and incorporate principles of universality, decolonization, social inclusion, anti-racism, decent work and well-being, among others outlined in the social policy framework. There needs to be specific legislated mechanisms for holding the government accountable for this plan, with targets and timelines, and address particular issues facing families and children, as outlined below. Along with the poverty indicators in this report card, the *One Chance to*

*be a Child* report<sup>31</sup> provides a baseline for well-being indicators across dimensions of food and housing security, learning, physical and mental health, social belonging and healthy environments. More disaggregated data is needed to ensure that poverty is ended for those who have disproportionately high rates. However, data for racialized groups is only available from the Census, and there is a lack of data about people with disabilities. The urgency to support children is to mitigate the long-term effects on their development because the longer they live in poverty, the worse for their well-being. The longer they live in poverty, the more expensive it is for us as a society. Interventions that bring children out of poverty in the early years have the highest return on investment.

**Recommendation: Implement and fund a Poverty Elimination Plan for Nova Scotia with targets and timelines to end child poverty by 2031. We specifically want to see the NS government commit to:**

- Reducing all poverty rates by 50% by 2027 and eliminating poverty by 2031 based on the CFLIM-AT. Targets should be set to reduce the number of people living in deep poverty, defined as 50% below their respective household poverty line, by one-third by 2027, measured by the CFLIM-AT.
- Targets and programs must explicitly aim to reduce child poverty by 50% and deep child poverty by one-third by 2027 and eliminate poverty by 2031, and explicitly for marginalized children, families and adults who experience higher rates of poverty, including Indigenous Peoples, racialized people, people with disabilities, immigrants and migrants and female-led lone parent families.
- Develop a data collection strategy that disaggregates data by Indigeneity, ability, race, gender, migrant status and 2SLGBTQI+<sup>32</sup> identity, and age, including for children under 15 years, among other sociodemographic identities. Disaggregated data are critical for poverty reduction planning, monitoring, evaluation and budgeting and must align with Indigenous data collection principles. Ongoing community conversations to gather qualitative data must inform this planning and evaluation.

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## Investing in child and youth wellbeing and advocacy

The poverty elimination plan will primarily focus on families and households, but investing in youth and their future is critical for lifting them out of poverty and breaking the cycle. As we discuss below, child and youth welfare needs to be transformed. There are also too many barriers to education at all levels, including the lack of early learning and child care and insufficient support for different needs and ability levels. Youth would benefit from more investment in public school funding and lower post-secondary education costs. They also need access to community-based mental health support while expanding youth employment opportunities.

The Nova Scotia government must respect children's fundamental rights and ensure that no more children and youth experience poverty. A Well-Being Strategy for Children and Youth must also be developed to complement the poverty elimination strategy. This strategy would be developed under the auspices of a Child and Youth Advocacy Office, with the support of a committee of diverse stakeholders and drawing on the *One Chance to Be a Child* report.<sup>33</sup>

The Child and Youth Advocacy Office must be legislated and funded to ensure it can effectively and independently monitor progress or lack thereof in ending child poverty and improving the wellbeing of children and youth in Nova Scotia. While the previous Nova Scotia government expressed support for this kind of office, there have been too many delays.<sup>34</sup> Children and youth deserve a strong voice to hold the government accountable for their well-being through individual and system change advocacy.

**Recommendation: Immediately establish the Child and Youth Advocacy Office and develop targets and timelines in a Wellbeing Strategy for Children and Youth.**

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## Transforming the child welfare and social assistance systems

In 2017, changes were made to the Children and Family Services Act [CFSA], including expanding the definition of neglect to include: *"the chronic and serious failure to provide to the child adequate food, clothing or shelter, adequate supervision, affection or cognitive stimulation, or any other similar failure to provide care."*<sup>35</sup> As the NS College of Social Workers

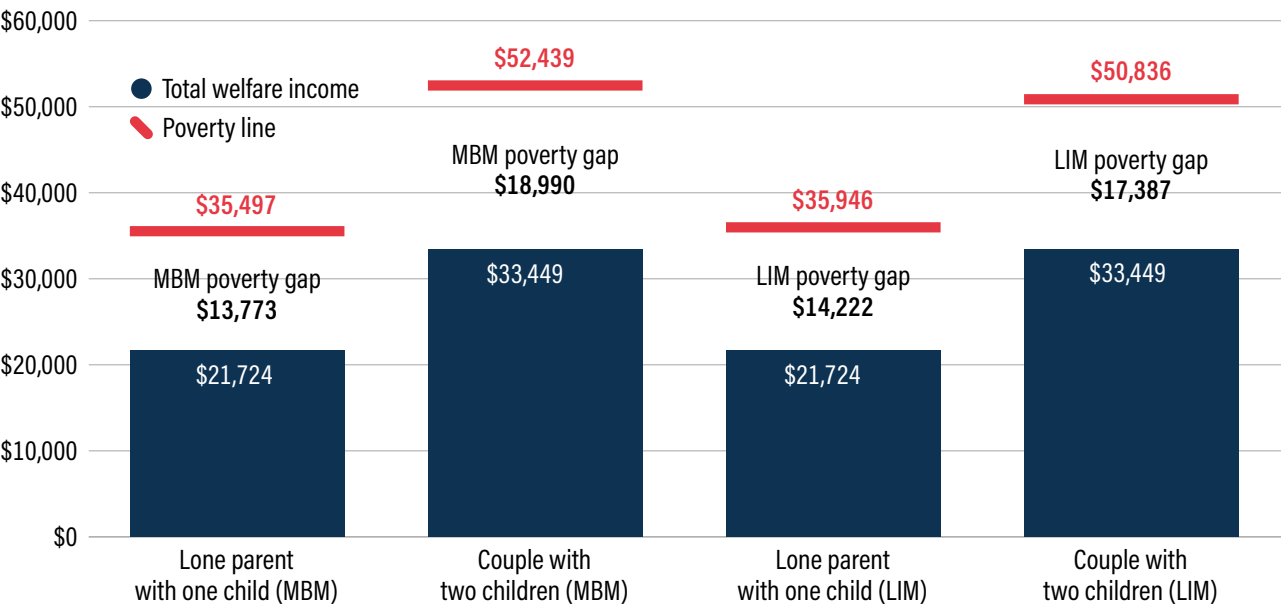
argues: “This provision opens up a punitive process for marginalized families for the failures of society.”<sup>36</sup> This change has expanded the reporting obligations of professionals, officials and others who work with children and families, contributing to the over-surveillance of racialized and vulnerable communities. The government does not take responsibility for providing insufficient income support to those who rely on it, which traps people in poverty and leaves tens of more thousands food insecure. The entire system needs transforming with careful attention to “disentangling the issues of poverty and maltreatment, particularly neglect.”<sup>37</sup> As per legislative requirements, the Nova Scotia government is currently reviewing the CFSA (to be completed by March 2025)<sup>38</sup> and thus has an opportunity to ensure that child protection is trauma-informed. The child welfare system has been described as “marred by bureaucracy, an overly complex and disconnected system, a tendency to blame the individual for their circumstances instead of working towards child and family well-being.”<sup>39</sup> We know that even those who work within the system want to see the system changed to one that values the social model of care and better supports families through timely, preventative, transparent and compassionate policy and practice.<sup>40</sup>

**Recommendation: Fundamentally transform the child welfare and social assistance systems to achieve meaningful rights-based, trauma-informed outcomes.** Specifically:

- Both the child welfare and social assistance systems must centre a social model of care to achieve meaningful rights-based, trauma-informed outcomes that include providing support that is without stigma and discrimination, not punitive and not based on assumptions rooted in individual blaming.
- The Child and Family Services Act must be amended so that no child is determined to need protection only because the household lacks the same or similar economic advantages as others in Nova Scotia, and instead support parents by lifting them out of poverty, ensuring they can provide for their own children’s needs.

**Figure 15 / Comparing welfare income poverty gap based on MBM with CFLIM by family type and size**

Adequacy of welfare incomes based on MBM and CFLIM, Nova Scotia, 2022



Source Welfare in Canada 2022, Maytree. 2023and Statistics Canada Table: 11-10-0066-01

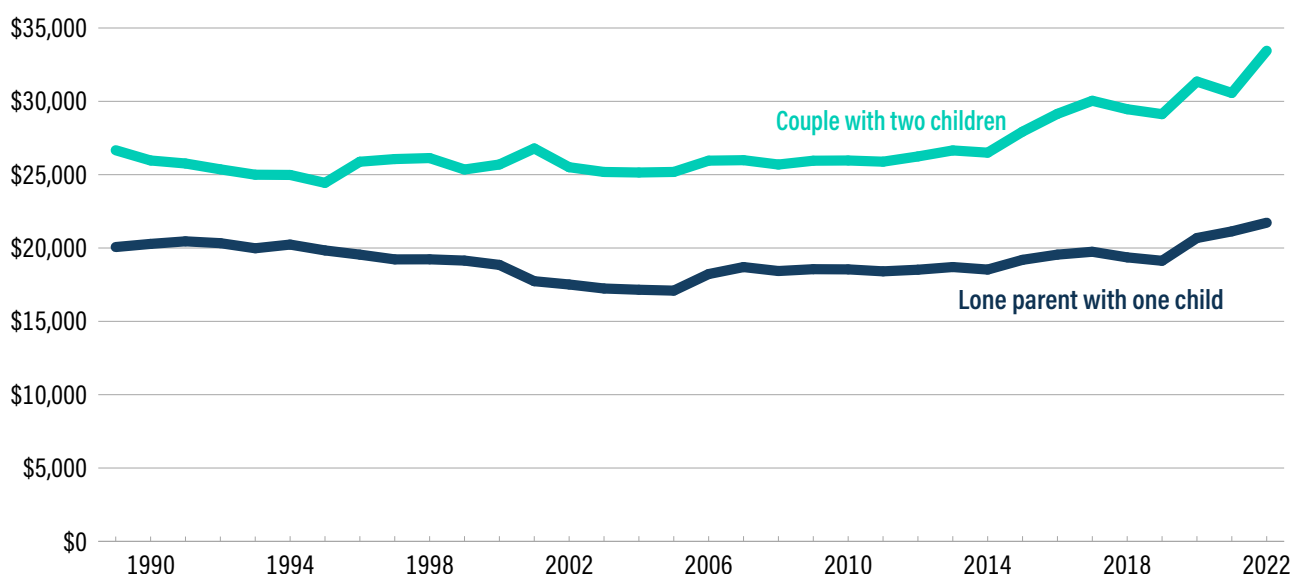
## Tackling income inequality, closing gaps in income security

The income support program of last resort in Nova Scotia, the Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA) program, is supposed to help people so that they do not struggle to afford the basics, but it does not do so. In addition to ESIA, families may also have access to federal benefits (the Canada Child Benefit, the GST credit, and Climate Action Incentive (only as of July 1, 2023, in NS), as well as other NS supports (the NS Affordable Living Tax Credit and the NS Child Benefit).

A hundred percent of families that rely on government support as their only source of income live far below all poverty lines. Figure 15 draws on data from Maytree, which reports total welfare incomes in Canadian provinces and territories annually for four different family types. Two of them (those with children), specifically a lone parent with one child aged two years and a couple family with two children aged 10 and 15, are included in our Figure. This report card uses data on welfare income for 2022 to compare to the poverty data being used.<sup>41</sup> As can be seen, single-

**Figure 16 / Total annual welfare income by family type, 1989-2022**

Nova Scotia



**Note** Values are in constant 2022 dollars, taking into account the effect of inflation. COVID-19-related payments are included in the basic social assistance, child benefit, and tax credit/benefit amounts, where applicable, in 2020 and 2021.

**Source** Welfare in Canada 2022, Maytree (2023)

parent families with one child relying on welfare for income received only 61 per cent of the Market Basket Measure poverty line. Nova Scotia had the second lowest level of income support for this family type in Canada after New Brunswick. Couple families with two children received 64 per cent of the MBM. Their welfare adequacy was the fourth lowest, after New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Ontario. These households with children relying solely on government support live in deep poverty because they receive less than 75% of the Market Basket Measure (the definition of deep poverty). The poverty gap based on the CFLIM measure of poverty for both family types is similar, whereby welfare incomes only amount to 60% of what is considered adequate for the single parent family and 66% for the couple family.

Figure 16 illustrates that total welfare incomes for a single-parent family with one child have remained relatively stagnant in Nova Scotia since 1989, with the lowest rates in the early 2000s. Between 2015 and 2017, incomes were trending upward for single parents and couple families. This coincided with federal child benefit (CCB) increases that began in July 2016 and were pegged to inflation in 2018. The data show,

however, that the provincial government failed to leverage federal investment to improve welfare incomes. Welfare rates fell in Nova Scotia for both family types between 2017 and 2019. In 2020, during a global pandemic, the maximum welfare income for both family types increased.

In 2022, the maximum welfare income was \$21,724 for single-parent families with one child, an increase of 2.8 per cent from 2021; however, this increase was negated by inflation. For couple families with two children, the maximum benefit was \$33,449, an increase of 9.8 per cent from 2021 (an amount above inflation which came in the form of two provincial and one federal cost-living payments, and a one-time provincial payment to assist with the impact of Hurricane Fiona).<sup>42</sup>

Table 5 shows the breakdown of welfare income, showing which benefits are available and from which level of government.<sup>43</sup> As can be seen, the additional social assistance provided in 2022 was the one-time payments, the two provincial ones (\$150 in March 2022 and \$250 in December 2022) and the one-time Hurricane Fiona Assistance Payment of \$150 per household (September 2022). Both household types also received an additional one-time federal GST credit payment related to the increased cost of living (November 2022). While federal benefits (CCB, GST) are indexed to inflation, provincial benefits levels (Nova Scotia Child Benefit, Nova Scotia Affordable Living Tax Credit) remained unchanged for 2022. (The Nova Scotia government announced that income assistance will be indexed to inflation for 2024-2025).<sup>44</sup>

Families deserve enough income support to feed, house, and clothe their children, to support healthy child development and not just survival. During the pandemic lockdown, the federal government set the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) at \$2000/month. In Nova Scotia, the CERB amount was nearly triple the monthly social assistance benefits of single parents with one child, who could receive \$10,444 per year in 2020. It was also almost \$800 more per month than basic social assistance for couples with two children at \$14,516 per year.<sup>45</sup> As shown in the previous chapter, providing a significant increase in income support would reduce poverty.

While the Nova Scotia government recently announced that it would begin indexing income assistance to inflation, more is needed to adjust an inadequate base that has been eroding for the past twenty years. How the rate of 2.5 per cent was chosen for 2024-25 is unclear, but it is well below the annual inflation rate for 2023, and concerningly, it is well below food and rental inflation, which make up most of a family's monthly income assistance budget. It also did not choose to adjust any other income supports to inflation.

**Table 5 / Welfare income component parts**

Nova Scotia, 2022

Income component	Single parent, one child	Couple, two children
Basic Nova Scotia social assistance	\$11,544	\$16,716
Additional Nova Scotia social assistance	\$550	\$1000
Federal child benefits	\$6,916	\$11,668
Provincial child benefits	\$1,100	\$2,150
Federal tax credits/benefits	\$1,151	\$1,390
Provincial tax credits/benefits	\$465	\$525
<b>Total 2021 income</b>	<b>\$21,724</b>	<b>\$33,449</b>

**Recommendation: Significantly improve and prioritize income support to lift families with children out of poverty.** We specifically recommend that the provincial government:

- Ensure that families who rely on income assistance receive enough income benefits to bring them above the CFLIM-AT.
- Index all income support programs to a special inflation index using the Nova Scotia Consumer Price Index for Food and Rental Accommodations. This measure would protect these supports from being eroded by the cost of living.
- Remove punitive conditions and allow Income Assistance recipients to keep more earnings before clawback (up to \$15,750).<sup>46</sup>
- Ensure sufficient income for families with children with disabilities to cover the additional costs for extra support often needed, recognizing that recent increases to disability supports will help these families but are likely not enough for most.<sup>47</sup>
- Redesign the NS Child Benefit by increasing the maximum benefit with the same amount provided for each child and ensuring that the full benefit is available to households with net income that approximates a living wage, calculated by CCPA-NS as the income needed to afford a budget of necessities (i.e., \$80,000 with a total phaseout at \$100,000) and raise it annually.<sup>48</sup>
- Provide additional income support for those who are pregnant and for children during the first years of life to support families when the cost of raising children is highest and when income tends to be lowest, including by instituting provincial maternity and parental leave



supplements for the first 24 months (when poverty is highest), for both parents to take, ensuring they have enough income to lift them over the CFLIM-AT and out of poverty.

- Enter an agreement with the federal government to stop the removal of the Canada Child Benefit and other benefit programs for families whose child is in temporary care and custody. The new provincial *Financial Stabilization Payment* recognizes the hardship caused by this problem by instituting a universal payment of \$500 monthly per child to families with children in temporary care and custody (\$700 for those receiving the Child Disability Benefit). However, this standard amount means some families will still get less than they would have from the CCB. It is an unnecessary additional program enrollment and transition during a stressful time.
- Enroll youth aging out of care automatically into an income support program available to those over 27. Prioritize them for supportive housing, employment, and training opportunities.

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## Decent work for all

As seen in the chapter on the depth of poverty, the child poverty rate based on market income alone would be 36.1 per cent in Nova Scotia (see Figure 8 above). A gap of \$12,988 for a single parent with one child would require 845 hours of work (without deductions) to bridge the gap based on the current minimum wage of \$15.20.

The minimum wage is too low. During the recent election, the PC party, which won another majority government, promised to raise the minimum wage to \$16.50. While this would be a welcome increase for minimum wage workers across the province, this is still far lower than any living wage rate across the province—the 2024 living wage rates for Nova Scotia range from \$24 to just over \$28.<sup>49</sup> Retroactively adjusting the inadequate minimum wage to inflation is not enough to support workers to get ahead—to afford the essentials and share in the wealth they help create through their daily work. Statistics Canada data<sup>50</sup> reveal that 35 per cent of workers in Nova Scotia earn \$20 or less. The perpetual low waged economy is not sustainable.

Lifting low-wage workers should also be part of addressing other forms of inequality, including gender and race; for example, we know that 56% of those who earn \$20 or less an hour in Nova Scotia are women.<sup>51</sup>

Furthermore, a gender pay gap in employment income exists. Across all occupation groups, the median employment income for women in Nova Scotia in 2022 was \$32,900/year compared to \$42,700/year for men. The gender pay ratio based on the median income in 2022 shows that for every dollar a man earned in Nova Scotia, women earned 77 cents. We also know that compared to the white male median wage, Black women in Nova Scotia face a pay gap that amounts to 42%, and Black men face a gap of 33%, whereas the gap for white women is 30%, which indicates a compounding impact of racism and sexism.<sup>52</sup>

Improving the income from employment for families with children is essential for ending poverty. Stable employment helps alleviate or reduce child poverty, but having a job that does not pay enough will not do so. The provincial government needs to fund a strategy that supports creating well-paying jobs and training opportunities, especially outside of HRM and for seasonal workers. Governments at all levels should also ensure that all their direct and contract employees are paid a living wage to help alleviate financial stress for families to support their children's development. Decent jobs also depend on the strength of workers' rights and protections. Nova Scotia's standards are among the weakest in the country and need to be strengthened to support health, safety and work-life balance for working families, including by shortening the standard work week to no more than 40 hours and incorporating paid family and sick leave provisions.<sup>53</sup> Strengthening collective bargaining is one of the most powerful tools for tackling income inequality.

Given that poverty is feminized and racialized, as shown by the higher poverty rates for lone mothers and racialized groups, it is also essential to strengthen the Pay Equity Act to include racial and other equity-deserving groups and extend it to the private sector. Addressing these gender disparities and addressing gender discrimination in employment should also be prioritized as part of a strategy to decrease rates of intimate partner violence. In September, the Nova Scotia government declared intimate partner violence an epidemic with the highest provincial rate in the country.<sup>54</sup> With over 30% of women in Nova Scotia who have been in an intimate relationship reporting being assaulted by their partner, it is important to strengthen interventions to support them to leave, including the financial capacity, as well as access to emergency shelters, long-term affordable housing and a social welfare system that supports them to keep their children.

**Recommendation: Establish conditions for decent work and quality job creation to ensure work not only lifts families out of poverty, but enables them and their children to thrive, specifically:**

- Develop a provincial plan for at least a \$20 minimum wage and continue to ensure it keeps up with the cost of living,
- All levels of government ensure that all their direct and contract employees are paid a living wage,
- Fund a provincial strategy that supports creating well-paying jobs and training opportunities for seasonal workers, prioritizing green jobs and the caring economy while increasing jobs to enhance public services.
- Strengthen labour standards to support working families' health, safety and work-life balance while enabling easier unionization and collective bargaining.
- Strengthen the Pay Equity Act to include racial and other equity-deserving groups and extend it to the private sector.
- Make investments to support women being able to leave a relationship when facing intimate partner violence, increasing women's financial and income security, access to long-term housing and decreasing punitive victim-blaming in the child protection system.

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## Addressing food and housing insecurity

Food insecurity encompasses a range of experiences, including worry about running out of food before you have the money to buy more, the need to eat less than ideal food quality, the need to cut the size of meals, skip meals, and, at the most severe, going whole days without food. Addressing food insecurity is urgent to safeguard children's health and fulfil our collective responsibility for their welfare. Furthermore, food insecurity is a marker of material deprivation more broadly, meaning that food-insecure children are very likely to be living in compromised housing conditions.<sup>55</sup>

**About the school food program:** We applaud the introduction of a universal school food program for all schools with elementary grades in Nova Scotia.<sup>56</sup> This has the potential to increase access to nutritious food, enhance learning, and support local food economies and school food workers (depending on how the program rolls out). This program, however, should not be justified as a solution to food insecurity. Without robust income security measures, families will increasingly struggle to feed their children where they spend most of their time—at home.

Investments into a universal school program should be tied to educational objectives, not child poverty and child food insecurity mitigation, which we know are the outcomes of inadequate and insecure incomes.<sup>57</sup> We know, for example, that 64 per cent of households in Nova Scotia receiving any income assistance were food insecure in 2021, the highest rate of food insecurity among income assistance recipients in Canada.<sup>58</sup> Sustained and substantive increases in income assistance will reduce food insecurity, as will significant increases in the minimum wage.

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## Emergency food support versus long-term income security

Families deserve to be able to feed their children all year round in their own homes without having to resort to charity. A new charity was started recently after the introduction of the school food program, when community members realized that “some children were not eating on the weekends.”<sup>59</sup> We also know that food bank usage has increased. It seems more palatable for the government to provide more funding to food banks<sup>60</sup> and more funding to organizations like family resource centres to engage in food relief work as well than to provide direct income support. Even these centres express concerns.

The family resource sector shared stories of their work in supporting families with food needs with the Fed Family Lab at Acadia University in the Summer of 2023. It is the frontline service providers who have been doing everything possible to support those struggling to make ends meet through a pandemic and through the highest inflation in decades, and without adequate funding. They know the families and children behind these numbers and know all too well the gap between their needs and the services available, as well as the gap between the cost of essentials and their income. As the staff and volunteers shared:

I would say before Covid, yes people were struggling with food insecurity but after Covid and with current inflation our families are constantly needing support to meet the food needs for their family and children. I would estimate that our calls for food insecurity help after Covid has gone up 80 per cent.

As staff and volunteers also said:

Government policy needs to change in that we blame families for their circumstance and approach the work as charity. Families are forced to ask

for support and provide reasons why they do not have food for their children. Emergency food delivery sets up the “provider” as feeling good for their efforts and charity giving and the “recipient” as feeling shame for asking. There is something so wrong about this approach. Access to affordable and healthy food should be seen as a basic human right instead of something we earn and take pride in our abilities to do so—or failure when we are unable.

Low-income status increases the risk of food insecurity and also makes affording housing a challenge. Those living in unaffordable housing often compromise their food purchasing. Families are experiencing tremendous stress because they are not being served by the for-profit housing market, especially when tenant protections are so weak.

**Recommendation: Realize and protect children’s right to housing and food, by specifically:**

- Providing adequate income support (as outlined above) is the primary mechanism to address food insecurity and should also ensure that the income recognizes the different needs of families with children, including the additional cost of food for pregnancy and infancy. Women have increased nutritional needs when pregnant and postnatally, making them particularly vulnerable to household food insecurity.<sup>61</sup>
- Ensuring that all Nova Scotians have meaningful access to safe, permanently affordable, secure, supported, and adequate housing, with an urgent priority to scale up provincial investment in non-market housing.<sup>62</sup> The investment must be focused on building enough public, non-profit, and cooperative housing units appropriate for the core housing needs of families with children, such as three or more-bedroom units.
- Strengthen tenant protections and tie rent control to the unit (thus closing both eviction incentives and fixed-term lease problems).

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## Improving affordability with public services

The social contract is broken. Thousands of children are falling through the holes in our social safety net. Poverty is one such hole that impedes the rights of parents to raise children in safe and healthy conditions and harms children’s ability to grow up healthy and to develop their

potential towards full participation in society. Rebuilding the social contract requires increased income and economic security investments, addressing labour market conditions with better standards and protections for low-paid workers, recognizing that housing and food for all is a right, and respecting Indigenous treaties and sovereignty.

**Recommendation: Critical to addressing social inequality and realizing equity and social justice requires more investments in public services and social infrastructure**, including the following:

- Extend universal **public health care** to cover full free access to prescription drugs, mental health, eye care, hearing aids, assistive devices/products, and harm reduction support for addictions and drug use,
- Build a high-quality, public, affordable **early learning and child care** provincial-wide system accessible to all families who want it at \$10 a day and free for low-income families.
- Bolster funding to ensure **inclusive public education** for children with diverse needs,
- Make **post-secondary education more affordable**, with a plan to make it free for all and immediately free for all youth who were in care,
- Cost share 50/50 with municipalities for **affordable public transit** and free for children up to age 18, and invest in a provincial inter-regional public transportation system.
- **Tackle the digital divide**, supporting low-income youth and their families to access affordable internet and needed technology for learning and community resources.
- When expanding the universal school food program for pre-K to 12, **commit to food procurement from local sources and equity-seeking groups**, supporting cultural food choices and well-paid school food workers.
- Work with local governments to increase investment in **barrier-free access to library resources and community sports and recreation services** for all children and youth.

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## Centre an intersectional lens to end all forms of poverty

There is a need to ensure that any strategy to end poverty addresses the reasons for the disproportionately high poverty rates, including Indigenous people, African Nova Scotians and other racialized communities, immigrants and refugees, lone mothers, and those with disabilities. These groups often face multiple intersecting barriers that prevent them from realizing their full potential, including because of racism, ableism, colonialism, and sexism.

The report commissioned by the NS College of Social Workers also underlined the importance of addressing racism in the child welfare system: “Racism is undeniably embedded within the structures of the child welfare system. Unless decisive action is taken, this pervasive problem will continue to deprive too many children of their right to a safe environment free from discrimination.”<sup>63</sup>

Tackling racism and other forms of discrimination requires programs to be designed by these communities, for these communities. Those needs include better support for immigrants and refugees, providing access to human translation services (not apps), removing barriers to recognizing foreign-trained credentials, improving language training, and ensuring labour standards protect their health and safety.

**Recommendation: Centre intersectional solutions, taking a pro-equity, anti-colonial, anti-racist approach to uproot all forms of discrimination as root causes of child poverty, and specifically:**

- Develop and fund proactive strategies developed in collaboration with communities that have disproportionately high poverty rates.
- Collaborate with First Nations governments and Indigenous organizations to address the factors leading to child and family poverty, on and off reserve.

While it is primarily the federal government’s responsibility to support self-determination for First Nations, financially and jurisdictionally, by sharing revenue and ensuring Jordan’s principle is respected for all Indigenous children. The provincial and municipal governments and all public institutions must also commit to reconciliation and supporting Indigenous self-determination while decolonizing mainstream institutions and policies.

# Conclusion

**N**ova Scotian children have suffered more than most from the failure to realize the promise made 35 years ago to end child poverty. Historically, Nova Scotia's child poverty rate has been higher, and our progress on reduction has been lacklustre. When national rates trended downward, Nova Scotia's rates did not always follow suit. This is because our provincial contributions to child poverty reduction have been historically stingy and targeted. Provincial income support amounts are kept so low families can never move over the poverty line. The provincial government sets income eligibility thresholds, including for the Nova Scotia Child Benefit, so tight that thousands of low-income children are missed, let alone moderate-income families who also deserve support. We choose one-off payment schemes to soften the blow of poverty and prop up community charity instead of enhancing the income benefits families can count on.

Child poverty is not inevitable; it is a policy choice. We know what changes in policies and systems work. Decent working conditions, expanding public services, and adequate safety nets are all political decisions.

This is the first child and family poverty report card of the newly-elected Nova Scotia government, and it is a call to action to stem the increasing tide of poverty before any more families get caught in poverty.



# Appendix A

## Child poverty rates by postal area

**Table 6 / Child poverty by postal area**

**Age 0-17, Nova Scotia, 2022**

i=postal city; ii=rural route

Postal areas 2021	Child poverty rate	Number of low-income children	Change from 2021
Abercombe i	20.0%	40	N/A
Addington Forks i	13.0%	30	N/A
Albert Bridge i	11.0%	30	N/A
Aberdeen ii	37.3%	190	<b>16.6%</b>
Afton Station ii	36.7%	110	No change
Amherst i	29.7%	510	<b>16.0%</b>
Antigonish i	23.1%	270	<b>10.0%</b>
Arcadia i	24.2%	80	<b>21.0%</b>
Arichat ii	23.5%	40	<b>5.9%</b>
Arisaig i	15.8%	30	N/A
Aylesford ii	24.6%	170	<b>21.2%</b>
Baddeck ii	19.0%	80	<b>-30.4%</b>
Barrington ii	27.8%	100	<b>80.5%</b>
Barrington Passage ii	38.5%	50	<b>66.7%</b>
Barss Corner ii	28.6%	40	<b>-7.1%</b>
Barton ii	33.3%	40	N/A
Bass River ii	30.0%	30	N/A
Bayhead ii	26.0%	130	N/A
Bay View/Digby ii	41.0%	340	<b>31.0%</b>
Beaverbank i	10.7%	180	<b>9.2%</b>
Bear River ii	42.9%	90	<b>63.1%</b>
Bedford i	18.0%	1110	<b>20.8%</b>
Beechville i	13.0%	70	<b>32.7%</b>
Berwick ii	24.4%	220	<b>17.9%</b>

Postal areas 2021	Child poverty rate	Number of low-income children	Change from 2021
Bible Hill i	27.8%	220	12.6%
Blockhouse ii	16.0%	40	8.1%
Boutiliers Point i	23.1%	30	N/A
Bridgetown ii	35.4%	170	22.5%
Bridgewater i	24.1%	340	No change
Brooklyn Corner i	23.8%	50	No change
Brooklyn i	30.8%	40	No change
Brooklyn ii (B0J1H0)	23.5%	40	-6.0%
Brookside i	7.1%	30	No change
Caledonia ii	33.3%	60	No change
Cambridge ii	18.2%	80	4.6%
Canning/Baxters Harbour ii	28.3%	170	52.2%
Canso ii	33.3%	60	19.8%
Caribou River/Scotsburn ii	21.4%	60	-10.8%
Central Onslow i	42.9%	30	N/A
Centreville ii	19.2%	100	4.3%
Chapel Island ii	26.5%	130	-4.3%
Chester Basin ii	23.1%	90	2.7%
Cheticamp ii	18.5%	50	29.4%
Church Point ii	31.8%	70	67.4%
Clarks Harbour ii	31.4%	110	25.6%
Clementsvalle ii	44.4%	40	44.4%
Clydesdale i	13.6%	30	No change
Coldbrook i	10.9%	60	16.0%
Cole Harbour i	15.2%	50	14.3%
Cornwallis Park ii	33.3%	30	11.2%
Cow Bay i	22.7%	50	24.7%
Dartmouth i	21.0%	3480	14.1%
Debert ii	23.3%	170	-5.3%
Dominion i	33.3%	100	24.7%
Donkin i	33.3%	30	-11.2%
East Amherst i	18.2%	60	-11.7%
East Chester/Windsor Road ii	26.3%	100	2.7%
East Margaretsville ii	42.9%	30	N/A
East Port Medway ii	25.0%	40	No change
East Preston i	40.9%	90	43.0%
Eastern Passage i	15.4%	350	20.3%
Ellershouse ii	21.2%	70	26.9%

Postal areas 2021	Child poverty rate	Number of low-income children	Change from 2021
Elmsdale i	11.5%	60	-4.2%
Enfield i	10.5%	110	-1.9%
Eskasoni i	64.5%	910	13.0%
Eureka ii	27.8%	50	31.8%
Evanston ii	30.0%	30	N/A
Fall River i	6.1%	110	-21.8%
Falmouth/Hantsport I (B0P1P0)	27.6%	160	21.6%
Falmouth I (B0P1L0)	17.6%	90	55.8%
First South/Lunenburg ii	19.7%	140	10.7%
Florence i	39.1%	90	17.4%
Forest Hill i	23.1%	60	11.1%
Gardiner Mines i	37.5%	30	N/A
Glace Bay i	35.7%	860	16.7%
Granville Ferry i	31.0%	180	17.9%
Greenfield ii	30.0%	30	N/A
Greenwich i	19.0%	40	32.9%
Greenwood ii	13.5%	70	75.3%
Gulf Shore ii	38.1%	80	52.4%
Guyborough ii	27.8%	50	11.2%
Halifax i	28.9%	6970	12.9%
Hammonds Plains i	8.6%	250	11.7%
Harrietsfield i	18.8%	30	6.8%
Hatchet Lake i	16.7%	50	25.6%
Havre Boucher ii	16.0%	40	No change
Head of Jeddore ii	15.8%	30	N/A
Heatheron ii	23.1%	30	N/A
Hebville i	21.4%	30	-19.9%
Hebron i	28.6%	40	N/A
Herring Cove i	17.1%	60	9.6%
Hilden ii	24.7%	190	44.4%
Hopewell ii	26.3%	50	-5.4%
Howie Centre i	21.4%	30	N/A
Hubley i	12.0%	60	-1.6%
Inverness ii	20.0%	70	23.5%
Italy Cross i	33.3%	40	N/A
Kennetcook ii	27.8%	150	19.3%
Kentville i	26.5%	500	3.9%
Kingston ii	23.7%	450	22.2%

Postal areas 2021	Child poverty rate	Number of low-income children	Change from 2021
Lake Echo i	14.8%	80	No change
Lake Loon i	23.1%	30	N/A
Lakeside i	21.7%	50	8.5%
Lakevale i	20.0%	30	N/A
Lantz i	14.3%	70	17.2%
Lawrencetown i (Halifax County)	9.3%	50	4.5%
Lawrencetown ii (Annapolis County)	34.5%	100	29.2%
Liverpool ii	32.8%	190	7.5%
Linacy i	20.7%	60	No change
Lockeport ii	17.6%	30	N/A
Louisbourg i	30.0%	30	No change
Louisdale ii	27.8%	50	25.2%
Lower Sackville i	19.6%	800	25.6%
Lower South River i	18.2%	60	No change
Lower Woods Harbour ii	26.7%	40	42.0%
Lyons Brook ii	25.7%	270	3.6%
Lucasville i	12.2%	50	2.5%
Maccan ii	37.5%	30	N/A
Mahone Bay ii	29.1%	160	20.7%
McLellans Brook i	29.4%	50	47.0%
McPhersons Mills i	37.5%	30	N/A
Meaghers Grant i	33.3%	30	-11.2%
Membertou i	44.4%	160	23.0%
Meadowvale ii	37.5%	60	99.5%
Merigomish ii	25.0%	60	15.2%
Meteghan ii	29.4%	50	17.6%
Meteghan River ii	20.0%	30	N/A
Middle Musquodoboit ii	30.4%	70	46.2%
Middle Sackville i	10.9%	370	29.8%
Milford ii	20.5%	90	28.9%
Mill Cove ii	18.9%	140	7.4%
Milton ii	38.9%	70	-5.6%
Millbrook i	42.9%	60	2.9%
Monastery ii	28.6%	40	7.1%
Moser River ii	50.0%	40	N/A
Mount Uniacke ii	18.1%	170	22.3%
Mulgrave ii	30.8%	40	-13.7%
Musquodoboit Harbour ii	18.9%	280	9.9%

Postal areas 2021	Child poverty rate	Number of low-income children	Change from 2021
New Germany ii	34.1%	140	36.4%
New Glasgow i	27.3%	500	25.8%
New Minas i	28.8%	210	16.6%
New Ross ii	40.9%	90	7.3%
New Victoria i	30.0%	30	No change
New Waterford i	39.8%	390	23.2%
Nictaux ii	32.9%	270	34.8%
Nine Mile River i	15.0%	30	-5.1%
North Alton i	25.9%	70	34.9%
North Preston i	66.7%	140	26.8%
North River i	19.0%	40	13.7%
North Sydney i	33.3%	320	14.0%
Onslow Mountain i	21.1%	40	33.5%
Oxford ii	28.6%	120	36.8%
Parrsboro/Port Greville ii	37.1%	130	35.9%
Pleasantville ii	25.0%	50	58.2%
Plympton ii	60.0%	30	N/A
Plymouth i	26.7%	40	No change
Pomquet i	10.7%	30	-6.9%
Port Hawkesbury i	31.0%	180	33.0%
Port Howe ii	37.5%	30	N/A
Port Williams ii	21.4%	90	7.0%
Porters Lake i	7.1%	50	-28.3%
Reserve Mines i	29.6%	80	43.0%
River Herbert ii	28.6%	40	No change
Riverton ii	25.0%	220	13.1%
Salmon River i	25.6%	110	16.4%
Sand Point/Bayhead ii	26.0%	130	13.5%
Sandy Point ii	31.6%	250	69.0%
Saulnierville ii	20.0%	30	N/A
Scotch Village/Newport ii	25.3%	200	5.0%
Scotchtown i	38.5%	50	-12.1%
Shag Harbour ii	23.1%	30	No change
Sheet Harbour ii	34.8%	80	9.4%
Shubenacadie ii	36.7%	400	6.1%
Southampton ii	40.0%	40	-20.0%
South Lochaber i	15.8%	30	N/A
South Ohio i	21.4%	30	N/A

Postal areas 2021	Child poverty rate	Number of low-income children	Change from 2021
Springfield ii	44.4%	40	6.9%
Springhill ii	40.3%	270	6.9%
St Bernard ii	43.1%	220	37.7%
Stewiacke ii	22.4%	150	1.4%
Sydney i	27.1%	1470	14.8%
Sydney Mines i	35.8%	390	30.7%
Tangier ii	25.0%	30	No change
Tidnish Bridge i	30.0%	30	No change
Thorburn ii	25.0%	50	No change
Three Mile Plains ii	30.7%	470	11.2%
Timberlea i	12.0%	230	5.3%
Trenton i	27.3%	210	23.5%
Truro Heights i	27.6%	80	29.0%
Truro i	32.1%	710	15.9%
Tusket ii	24.5%	120	25.0%
Upper Musquodoboit ii	30.0%	30	No change
Upper Rawdon ii	29.4%	50	N/A
Upper Sackville i	16.7%	40	4.4%
Upper Tantallon i	4.3%	40	2.4%
Valley i	9.2%	70	13.6%
Wagmatcook ii	73.7%	140	32.6%
Wallbrook i	33.3%	40	33.2%
Walton ii	33.3%	40	-8.5%
Waterville ii	25.0%	120	25.0%
Waverley i	11.6%	50	24.7%
Wellington i	9.4%	30	8.7%
Western Shore ii	30.8%	40	33.8%
Westphal i	13.6%	30	-9.3%
Westville ii	25.6%	300	24.9%
Whites Lake i	10.7%	30	-30.5%
Wileville i	25.0%	30	N/A
Williamswood i	14.7%	50	2.8%
Wilmot ii	29.4%	100	88.5%
Windsor Junction i	9.4%	30	No change
Wolfville i	23.4%	110	9.9%
Yarmouth i	39.7%	500	6.1%

**Note** Only communities with 30 or more low-income children are included in this table

**Source** Prepared using Statistics Canada, (T1 Family Files, 2021)

# Appendix B

## Child poverty rates by postal area (FSA), and within urban cores

**Table 7 / Child poverty by postal area, Halifax Regional Municipality Urban Core and Sydney**

Forward Sortation Areas (FSA), 2022

Region	Postal area	Number of low-income children	Child poverty rate	Change from 2021
Bounded by Lake Charles/Micmac/Topsail	B2X	490	21.6%	0.0%
Downtown Dartmouth south to Woodside	B2Y	540	24.6%	10.3%
North Dartmouth/Harbourview/Highfield park/Albro Lake/Crichton Park	B3A	1080	32.4%	16.5%
Burnside	B3B	100	28.6%	-2.7%
South End Peninsula	B3H	420	22.7%	12.4%
Downtown Halifax	B3J	160	41.0%	23.1%
North End Peninsula	B3K	990	34.9%	8.4%
West End Peninsula	B3L	720	25.2%	19.4%
Bedford Basin	B3M	2180	31.1%	13.1%
Fairview & south to Rotary	B3N	500	21.6%	17.4%
Armdale/Purcells Cove	B3P	460	20.0%	13.6%
Spryfield	B3R	930	41.9%	10.6%
Bayers Lake	B3S	540	26.6%	10.8%
Bedford	B4A	660	17.4%	28.9%
Bedford	B4B	450	19.2%	9.7%
Sydney (Southwest)	B1L	60	14.3%	-2.1%
Sydney (East)	B1M	20	20.0%	N/A
Sydney (North)	B1N	390	41.5%	20.6%
Sydney (North Central)	B1P	680	30.5%	12.5%
Sydney (West)	B1R	110	16.2%	20.9%
Sydney (Central)	B1S	200	19.8%	8.8%

**Note** Forward Sortation Area (FSA) is defined by the first three digits of a postal code. This table includes child poverty rates in the Halifax Regional Municipality Urban core. Neighborhood place names are assigned to postal codes using prior research or Google Maps data.

**Source** Prepared using Statistics Canada, T1 Family Files, 202

# Appendix C

## Data sources, measures of poverty, low-income thresholds and key definitions

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### Data sources

The **T1 Family File** (T1FF) data cover all persons who completed a T1 tax return for the year of reference or who received Federal child benefits, their non-filing spouses (including wage and salary information from the T4 file), their non-filing children identified from three sources (a file pertaining to Federal Child Benefits, the births files, and an historical file) and filing children who reported the same address as their parent, including those living on First Nations reserves. Development of the small area family data is based on the **census family** concept. The census family concept groups individuals either in a census family (parent(s) and children living at the same address) or identifies them as persons not in census families. According to Statistics Canada, the T1FF captures the income situation of 94.4 per cent of families in Canada.<sup>64</sup> The T1FF is closer to the Census in that it captures data from most of the population of families, though this data does not include racialized, immigration, or Aboriginal status.

The **Canadian Income Survey (CIS)**<sup>65</sup> is an annual survey of a sample of Canadians that provides a portrait of income. It covers all individuals in Canada, excluding persons living on reserves and other Indigenous settlements in the provinces, the institutionalized population, and



households in extremely remote areas with very low population density. The CIS sample size is about 60,000 households.

The Canadian **Census** is a mandatory survey of the population conducted every five years. The last Census was conducted in 2021 and used income data from 2020, and the next one will be 2026.

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## Poverty measures

The **low-income measure** defines an individual as having low income if their household's adjusted after-tax income falls below 50 per cent of the median adjusted after-tax income. The LIM is calculated either using Census data or data from the Canadian Income Survey, for households (not families).

The **CFLIM-AT** (Census Family After-Tax Low-Income Measure) compares income of a census family to the rest of the population. The CFLIM-AT is a relative measure of poverty that determines poverty thresholds set at 50 per cent of the median Canadian family income. After taking taxes and benefits into account and adjusting for family size, those with incomes below this threshold, are considered low-income. When calculating the CFLIM-AT with T1FF data, the unit of analysis is the *census family*.

The **market basket measure** is the official poverty measure in Canada, measured based on the cost of a specific basket of goods and services representing a modest, basic standard of living. It includes the costs of food, clothing, footwear, transportation, shelter and other expenses for a reference family. These costs are compared with the disposable income of families to determine whether they fall below the poverty line.<sup>66</sup> The basket is costed in 50 regions across Canada making it sensitive to regional differences. The current MBM uses 2018 as the base year for what constitutes a 'modest standard of living'. The income data used in the calculation of the MBM is based on the Canadian Income Survey (CIS), and the Census, and not yearly T1FF data.

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## Low-income thresholds

Low-income measure thresholds are shown in Tables 8 and 9 for families of different sizes.

**Table 8 / 2022 thresholds for after-tax census family low income measure**

Number of family members	Low income measure threshold
1	\$25,418
2	\$35,946
3	\$44,025
4	\$50,836
5	\$56,836
6	\$62,261
7	\$67,250
8	\$71,893
9	\$76,254
10	\$80,379

**Note** The CFLIM-AF for any census family size can be calculated by multiplying \$25,418 by the square root of the family size. For example, the after-tax CFLIM for a family of 4 is \$50,836. This is calculated by multiplying \$25,418 by 2 (square root of 4).

**Source** Technical Reference Guide for the Annual Income Estimates for Census Families, Individuals and Seniors. T1 Family File, Final Estimates, 2021. Statistics Canada—Catalogue no. 72-212-X 9

**Table 9 / Market Basket Measure thresholds, Nova Scotia**

2022 constant dollars, 2018 base year

Number of family members	Nova Scotia rural	Nova Scotia population under 30,000	Nova Scotia population 30,000 to 99,999	Halifax, Nova Scotia	Cape Breton, Nova Scotia
1	\$23,766.50	\$24,279.00	\$24,454.50	\$25,798.50	\$23,714.00
2	\$33,610.58	\$34,335.36	\$34,583.55	\$36,484.24	\$33,536.34
3	\$41,163.58	\$42,051.23	\$42,355.19	\$44,683.00	\$41,072.65
4	\$47,533.00	\$48,558.00	\$48,909.00	\$51,597.00	\$47,428.00
5	\$53,141.89	\$54,287.84	\$54,680.26	\$57,685.45	\$53,024.50
6	\$58,213.67	\$59,468.98	\$59,898.85	\$63,190.85	\$58,085.07

**Note** The CFLIM-AT for any census family size can be calculated by multiplying \$25,418 by the square root of the family size. For example, the after-tax CFLIM for a family of 4 is \$50,836. This is calculated by multiplying \$25,418 by 2 (square root of 4).

**Source** Statistics Canada Table 11-10-0066-01

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## Key terms and definitions<sup>67</sup>

**After-tax income** is the total of market income and government transfers, less income tax. Market income consists of employment income and private pensions, as well as income from investments and other market sources.

**Food insecurity** is the inadequate or insecure access to food due to financial constraints. Households can experience marginal, moderate or severe food insecurity.

**Core housing need** is when you are living in housing that is unaffordable (it costs 30 per cent or more of the household's income), unsuitable (does not have enough bedrooms for the number of people in the home), inadequate (needs major repairs), **and** you cannot afford to live somewhere elsewhere in your community.

**Government transfers** include benefits such as Old Age Security, the Guaranteed Income Supplement, the Canada Pension Plan and the Quebec Pension Plan, Employment Insurance, social assistance, the goods and services tax credit, provincial tax credits, and child benefits.

For 2020 and 2021, government transfers include emergency response and recovery benefits in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., Canada Emergency Response Benefit, Canada Emergency Student Benefit, Canada Recovery Benefit, Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit and Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit) and programs administered by provincial governments as well as a special one-time payment to disabled Canadians.

**Indigenous people** refers to persons aged 16 years and over who self-identified as First Nations (North American Indian), Métis or Inuk (Inuit).

**Racialized people** is the term used in this report instead of the term visible minority, which is considered an offensive and derogatory term. Statistics Canada still uses the visible minority term, which is defined by the *Employment Equity Act* as "persons, other than Indigenous peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour." The data on racialized people includes: South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Arab, Latin American, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean and Japanese.

**Unit of Analysis:** An **economic family** refers to a group of two or more persons who live in the same dwelling and are related to each other by blood, marriage, common-law union, adoption or a foster relationship. This concept differs from the census family concept used in the Annual Income Estimates for Census Families and Individuals. **Census families** are members of a couple family, with or without children, and lone parents and their children. **Households**, in contrast, are any group of individuals who live in the same dwelling.

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This report is available free of charge at [www.policyalternatives.ca](http://www.policyalternatives.ca). The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) is an independent policy research organization. This report has been subjected to peer review and meets the research standards of the centre. The opinions in this report, and any errors, are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the CCPA or funders of the report.

The CCPA-NS office is located in K'ijipuktuk in Mi'kma'ki, the unceded, un-surrendered ancestral land of the Mi'kmaq people. We recognize that we are all treaty people and have responsibilities to each other and this land. We also recognize the 400+ year history of communities of African descent and the 50 African Nova Scotian communities throughout the region today. We commit to actions that will move forward the work of truth, reconciliation, justice and equity.

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