



FEBRUARY 2026

# SASKATCHEWAN CHILD POVERTY REPORT CARD 2026

Growing and Deepening Child Poverty in Saskatchewan

CAMPAIGN 2000  
END CHILD & FAMILY  
POVERTY

# Introduction

**H**idden beneath the Saskatchewan government's much vaunted narrative of provincial economic prosperity is a more troubling story of how the most vulnerable in our province are faring. While Premier Scott Moe is quick to promote any and all positive economic indicators, his government has remained disturbingly silent on the growing and deepening poverty in our province. Despite having some of the poorest poverty indicators in the country, the Saskatchewan party government has not really made an attempt to seriously address the issue for more than a decade. In 2016, the government released their one and only attempt at a poverty reduction strategy. That plan — which was widely criticized as being inadequate by its own advisory group members — at least made the promise to reduce “enduring poverty (lasting two years or longer) by 50% by 2025.” It is probably best for the government that this promise has largely been forgotten, because as we approach ten years since that promise was made, poverty in Saskatchewan — and in particular child poverty — is not only growing, but deepening.

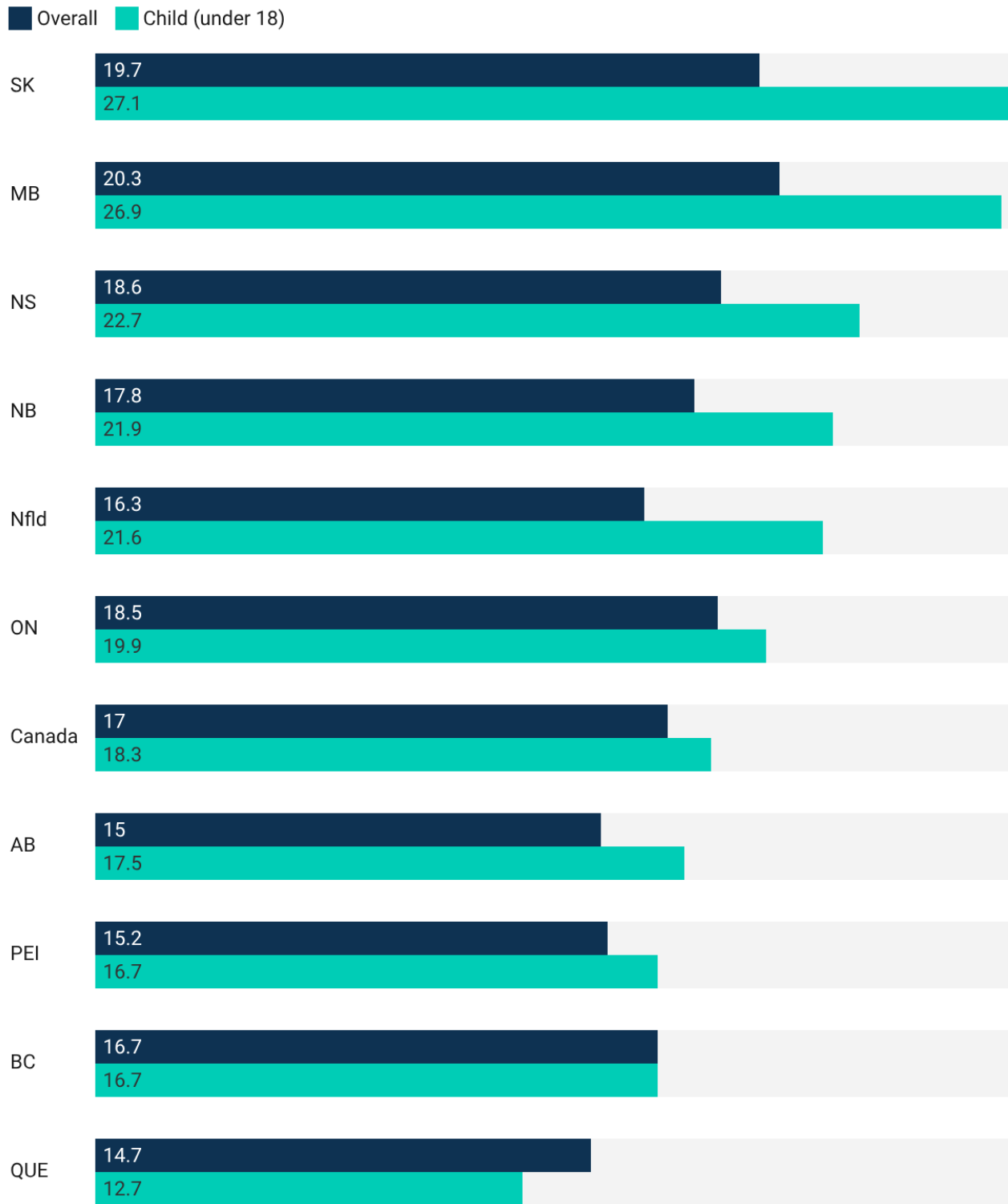
The following report card gives a comprehensive overview of the record of family and child poverty in our province. We hope that this report card will be a wake-up call to a government that has been largely deaf to the concerns of anti-poverty advocates for far too long. These numbers demonstrate that we need a much more concerted effort by the Saskatchewan government to combat the deleterious effects poverty will no doubt have on the next generation of our province's children if it is continued to be ignored.

# Poverty in Saskatchewan: An Overview

Saskatchewan's overall poverty rate of 19.7 percent exceeds the 17 percent poverty rate for Canada as a whole. Comparatively, Saskatchewan holds the second highest overall poverty rate of all the provinces, with only Manitoba — at 20.3 percent — higher. Saskatchewan's poverty rate has increased annually since the pandemic in 2020 when the poverty rate hit a low of 15 percent.

78,050 children under the age of 18 in Saskatchewan were in poverty in 2023, a child poverty rate of 27.1 percent. This is well above Canada's national child poverty rate of 18.3 percent and is the highest child poverty rate of all the provinces. Only Nunavut with a child poverty rate of 31.5 percent has a higher rate in the entire country. Children under six in Saskatchewan fare even worse, with a 30.39 percent poverty rate — or almost one-third of children in the province. Almost one out of every two children in lone-parent families in Saskatchewan are poor, with a poverty rate of 49.4 percent.

**Figure 1 / Poverty rates by province**



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# Depth of Poverty in Saskatchewan

Compounding these rather bleak statistics is the *depth of poverty* in our province. The depth of poverty refers to how far below the poverty line a family's income falls in relation to the after-tax low-income measure (LIM). It is often referred to as the 'low-income' or 'poverty gap.' Saskatchewan low-income families have the largest poverty gaps of all the provinces — with only Nunavut and the NorthWest Territories recording larger poverty gaps in certain economic families.

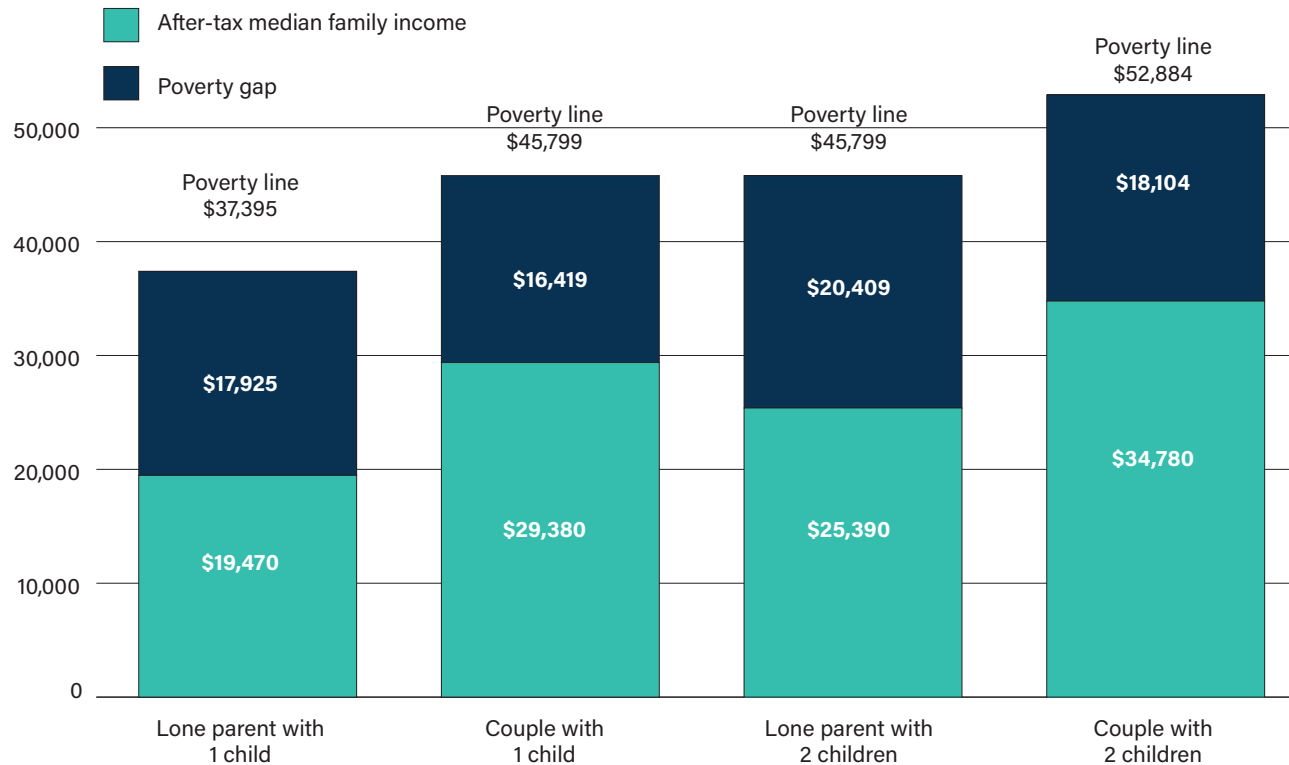
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## Government transfers pull many in Saskatchewan out of poverty

Government transfers in the form of child tax benefits, tax credits, and social assistance were important in helping to reduce poverty in the province. For Saskatchewan in 2023, the child poverty rate of 27.1 per cent would have been 39.2 per cent without these federal and provincial government transfers. That is, the provincial poverty rate was reduced from roughly one in three children to one in four through these government transfers. The Canada Child Benefit alone acts as a significant anti-poverty measure, without it, Saskatchewan's poverty rate would jump from 27.1 percent to 35.3 percent.

Importantly, these transfers lift a significant percentage of the working poor out of poverty. Despite arguments that employment alone is the best

**Figure 2 / Depth of low income for poor families in Saskatchewan, 2023**



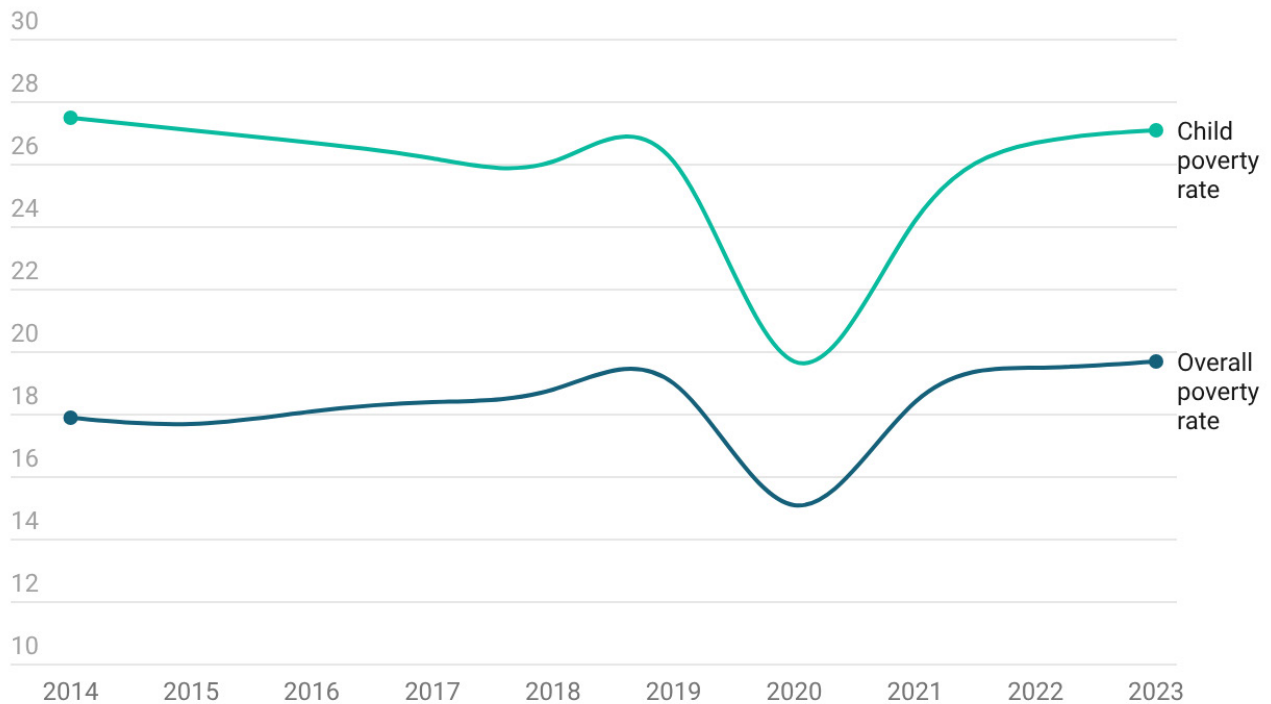
route out of poverty, Saskatchewan’s child poverty rate of 27.1 percent would be more than ten points higher (37.5 percent) were Saskatchewan families to rely on market income alone. Even with employment earnings, many families are still below the poverty line, with government transfers an essential source of needed income.

## Child poverty intensifying in Saskatchewan

Campaign 2000 has consistently stated that child poverty is not inevitable, but that it is a result of choices. Federal politicians have pledged to end child poverty in 1989, 2009 and 2015. Despite these promises and pledges, as of 2023, child poverty in Canada continues to deprive over 1.38 million children of the economic conditions required for their full development.

Currently, the poverty rate for children (those aged 0 to 17 years) in Saskatchewan is 27.1 percent. While the child poverty rate in

**Figure 3 / Saskatchewan poverty rates by year**



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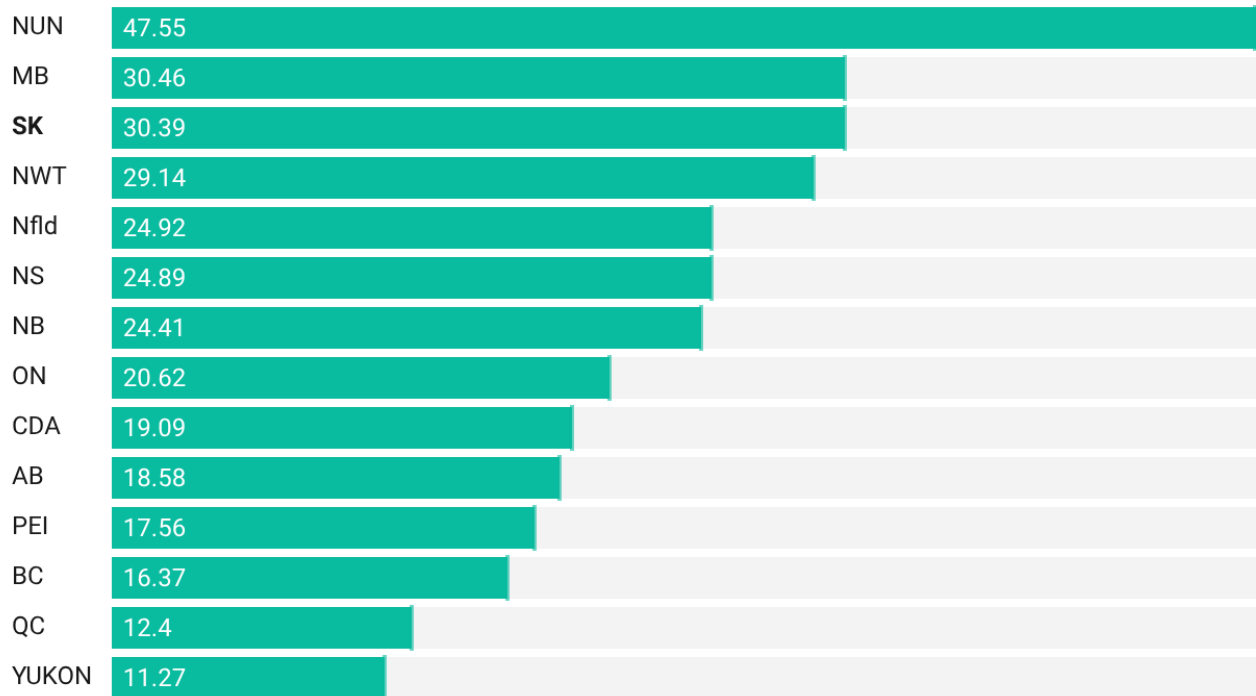
Saskatchewan saw a dramatic dip during the COVID pandemic, in large part due to increased federal government income support, it has returned to its historic average over the past few years. As we see in the chart below, child poverty in the province has remained stubbornly constant at relatively the same rate for the better part of a decade save for a brief interval during the pandemic.

For children under six years of age, poverty is even more acute. In 2023, Saskatchewan recorded 26,390 children under the age of six falling below the low-income measure. This results in an astonishing 30.39 percent poverty rate for children under six in Saskatchewan – or almost one-third of children – and far above the national rate of 19 percent. In comparison to other provinces, our child poverty rate for children under six is a close second only to Manitoba, which recorded a 30.46 percent poverty rate.

Within Saskatchewan, child poverty rates can vary dramatically depending on location. For example, if we view poverty rates by economic region within the province we can see major disparities, particularly between urban versus more rural and northern areas of the province.

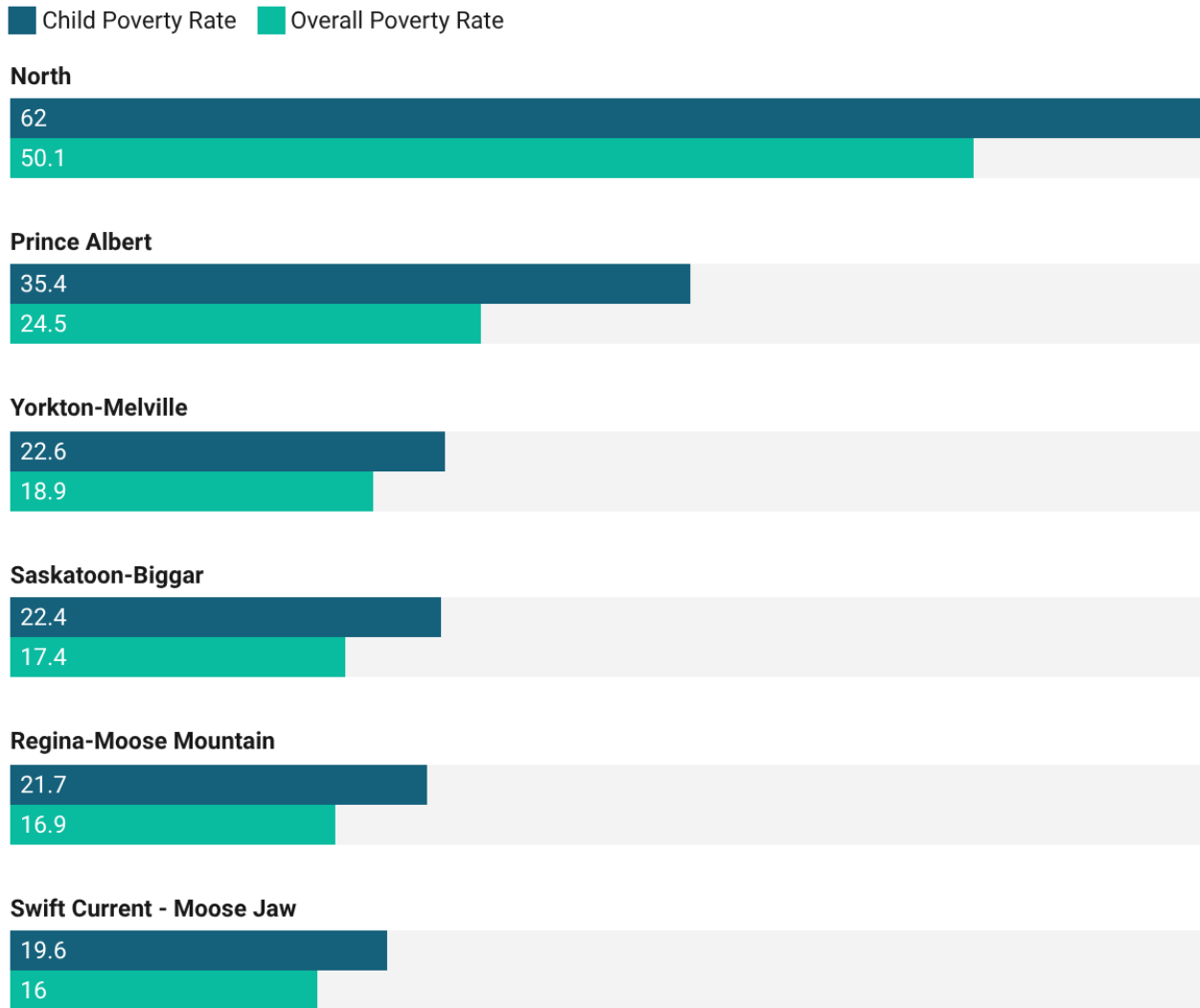
**Figure 4 / Child poverty rates by province/territory**

Under Six Child Poverty Rate



Indeed, northern areas of the province are subject to enduringly high levels of poverty for children under 18, with rates over 60 percent.

**Figure 5 / Child poverty by economic region**



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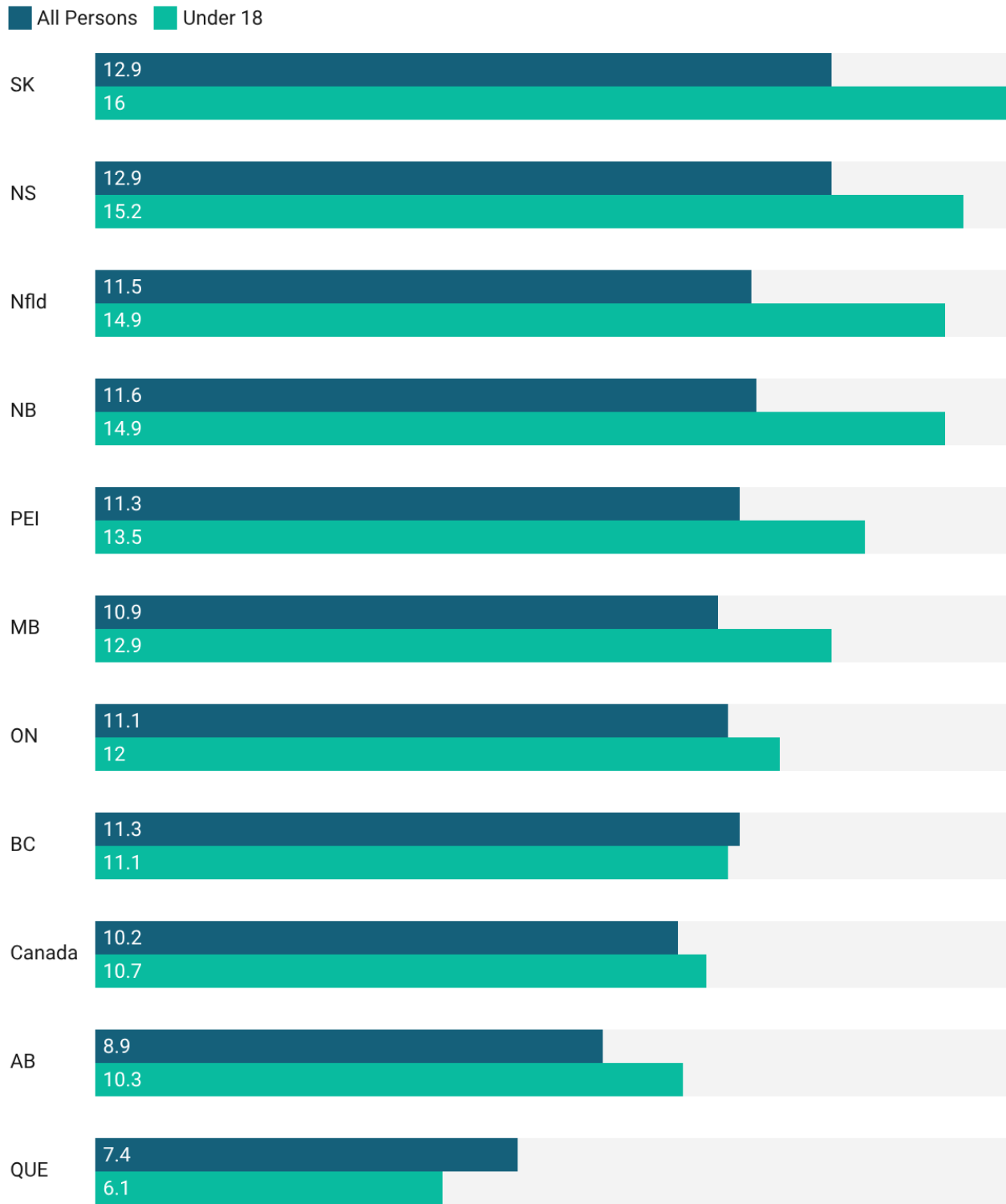
# Poverty Measures

For this report card, we rely on data using the Census Family Low Income Measure, After Tax (CFLIM-AT), a *relative* measure of poverty that defines poverty as below the median income of all tax filers. The thresholds are calculated at median (50%) income, adjusted for family size. If an individual or family's income is below 50%, or the median income for their family size, they are considered to be living in poverty.

Relative measures are tied to the growth of the economy and illustrate how that growth is distributed. The Low Income Measure (LIM) is one of the most observed indicators of health, mental health and well-being. It is especially useful in tracking changes in living standards and identifying groups who are systemically marginalized or socially excluded by comparing the situation of low income individuals and families to that of the rest of society. The CFLIM threshold, used in this report card, establishes a transparent and clearly defined norm; as incomes rise or fall, so does the threshold. After Tax measures (CFLIM-AT) capture the effect of taxes and government transfers on incomes.

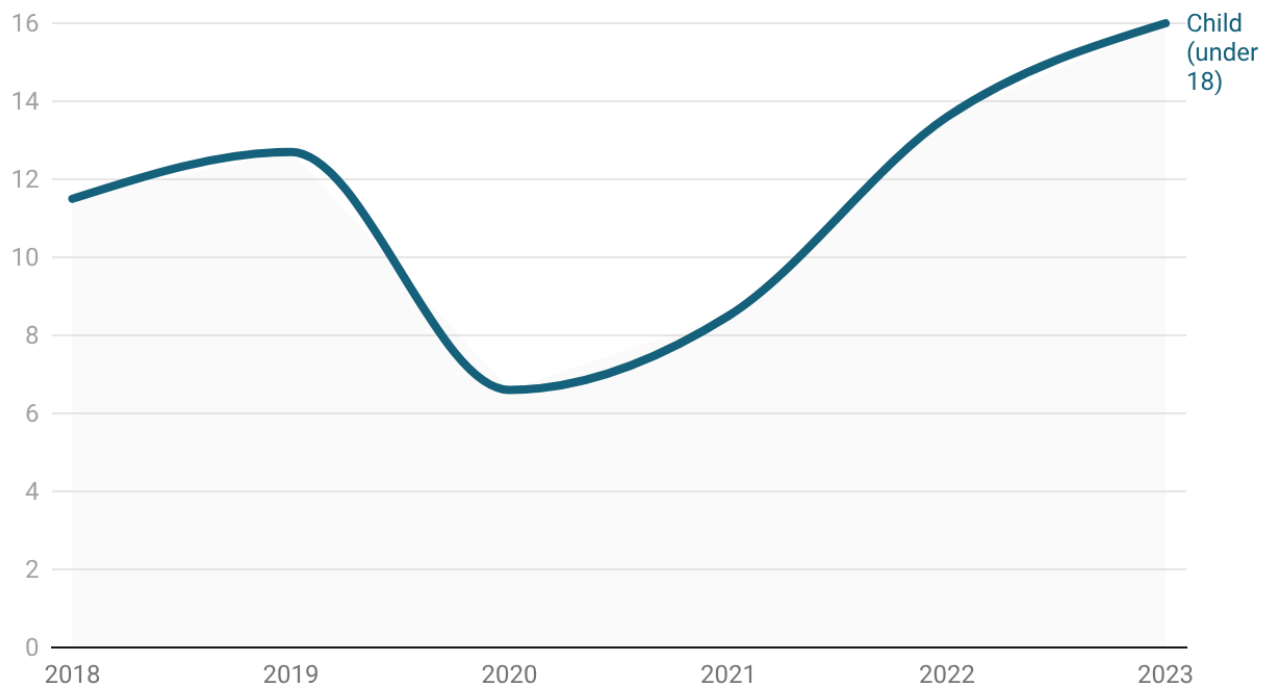
The Market Basket Measure (MBM) is Canada's Official Poverty Line. It is a consumption-based measure of poverty. Thresholds are established by calculating a basket of goods and services (comprising food, shelter, clothing, transportation and other necessities) that a family would need to purchase to have a 'modest' or 'basic' standard of living. What is included in the basket and what is excluded from the basket can be a point of contention. 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 CIS is a voluntary survey which relies on a representative sample of respondents. Statistics Canada acknowledges that survey

**Figure 6 / Percentage by low-income MBM**



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**Figure 7 / Saskatchewan children under 18 by MBM**



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data risks under-reporting the disposable incomes of both the very wealthy and the very poor. Nevertheless, neither is a perfect measure of capturing income-based poverty. Campaign 2000 has written previously on the limitations of the MBM, while the tax filer data provides limited demographic disaggregation. However, it is important to note that even by the standards of the MBM poverty measurement, Saskatchewan still records the highest child poverty rate of all the provinces. Similarly, using the Market Basket Measurement, we see the same rebound of child poverty rates in Saskatchewan after historic lows recorded for a brief interval around the pandemic.

By either poverty measure, Saskatchewan records some of the worst economic outcomes for children in the country. This makes it all the more incumbent on the current government to make poverty in Saskatchewan a far greater priority. To that end, we conclude this report card with a list of policy recommendations that could reverse the growing and deepening poverty for families in our province.

## **Control volatile rental increases**

While Saskatchewan remains one of the more affordable provinces for housing, the lack of rental regulation has allowed for spectacular volatility in rental prices over the past few years. Over the past five years, the cost of rent in purpose-built apartments in Saskatchewan has risen 33.9 per cent. Moreover, while other cities are beginning to see declines in asking prices for vacant units, Regina and Saskatoon witnessed some of the highest rent increases in the country over the last year. Low-income households simply do not have the ability to absorb these kinds of rental increases. The government should seriously consider the enactment of a rental increase cap in conjunction with their current strategy to incentivize the construction and repair of more affordable and below-market rental units.

## **Create a Saskatchewan child benefit**

Saskatchewan has one of the highest proportions of children under 18 of all the provinces. This makes our nation-leading child poverty rates all the more troublesome. We need to ensure that this emerging demographic does not have its future opportunities diminished or even foreclosed due to the damaging impacts of child poverty. The government should follow the example of other provinces that have introduced a child or family benefit that supplements the federal child benefit.

## **Index social assistance benefits to inflation and cover utility costs**

Unlike other provinces, Saskatchewan's social assistance benefits are not indexed to inflation, leading to the erosion of their purchasing power year over year. While the government has increased benefits periodically over the past few years, this has been an ad-hoc affair and doesn't provide the certainty and buffer against inflation that families on what are already meagre incomes need. There is also an urgent need to adequately cover the cost of basic utilities (power, heat, water, phone) within the social assistance benefit. Currently, utility costs are folded into a basic shelter benefit that cannot even cover average rents, never mind utilities.

## **Increase the minimum wage**

While the provincial government has recently increased the amount of the minimum wage, it is still one of the lowest in the country, and far below what a living wage would be. The Saskatchewan government should make a commitment to move the province from laggard to leader, aiming

to increase the province's minimum wage to be competitive with other provinces.

### **Increase provincial transfers to low-income residents**

As this report card demonstrates, government transfers are one of the most effective ways to combat poverty. The Saskatchewan government should commit to increasing the Saskatchewan low-income tax credit as well as increasing the income threshold so more families can access the full benefit. The threshold for eligibility for the Saskatchewan Employment Incentive should be reduced so more families can claim this benefit.

Saskatchewan is also one of the few provinces that does not currently provide residents with a provincial sales tax rebate payment similar to the federal GST rebate. As the federal government moves to increase the GST rebate, a supplementary PST rebate in Saskatchewan could be another important income transfer for low-income families.

### **Commit to Universal Childcare Accessibility**

Lastly, the provincial government should continue its commitment to delivering universal, \$10 a day childcare by improving accessibility throughout the province so that all working families can access this important universal social program.

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**Cover photo**

Karolina Grabowska [www.kaboompics.com](http://www.kaboompics.com)

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Campaign 2000: Campaign 2000 is a non-partisan, cross-Canada coalition of over 120 national, provincial and community organizations, committed to working together to end child and family poverty in Canada. Campaign 2000 coordinated the preparation of the 2025 national and provincial poverty report cards. These can be viewed and downloaded at <https://campaign2000.ca>

**About the author**

Simon Enoch (PhD) is a Senior Researcher with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives in Saskatchewan.

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