

Backgrounder

BC Child Poverty Report Card

February 14, 2023

Key Findings

- This is First Call's 26th Annual BC Child Poverty Report. In 2020, the year this report covers, there were 116,500 (13.3%) children and youth living in poor households with many living in deep poverty.
- At 13.3%, BC had a slightly lower child poverty rate than Canada at 13.5%.
- The poverty rate for BC children in lone-parent families was 38.3%, down from 49% in 2019. Fifty-nine per cent of BC's poor children in 2020 lived in lone-parent families. Eighty per cent of BC lone parents were women in 2020.
- The poverty rate for BC children in couple families was 6.6% in 2020, down from 9.7% in 2019.
- Many BC families had annual incomes that were \$11,000 to \$12,000 below the poverty line.
- The child poverty rate on fifty-nine BC First Nations reserves in 2020 was 29.2% with a higher rate on rural reserves (33.9%) than on urban reserves (25.2%).
- Many of the regional districts with the highest child poverty rates were located in coastal areas, particularly along the north and central coast areas.
- Thanks to government income transfers, 153,630 BC children were kept out of poverty in 2020.
- 94% of BC families with children received some sort of government pandemic benefit in 2020.
- BC families with children in the highest income decile collected 16 times more than families in the lowest income decile. This was a slightly larger disparity than the Canadian average ratio of 15.

Methodology: First Call, Campaign 2000, and our provincial partners all use the Census Family Low Income Measure After Tax (CFLIM-AT). The LIM is the international standard as it allows us to measure income inequality in Canada and to compare across nations.

Key Recommendations to Governments

First Call offers the following recommendations as concrete steps the provincial government can take to reduce the depth and scope of child poverty. Please see the report for the full text and recommendations to all levels of government.

- Make sure all workers in BC are covered by the hourly minimum wage by the end of 2023 and establish a permanent Fair Wages Commission.
- Significantly raise income and disability assistance rates to bring total welfare incomes up to the CFLIM after-tax poverty thresholds and index them to inflation. Adjust income and disability assistance rates for families with a child with disabilities to recognize the additional costs associated with raising a child with extra support needs.
- Index the BC Child Opportunity Benefit to inflation to ensure the value of the benefit does not erode over time.

- Collaborate with First Nations, Métis and Inuit governments and Indigenous organizations to develop and implement plans to prevent, reduce and eradicate child and family poverty in Indigenous communities.
- Automatically enroll all young people transitioning out of care in an income support program that meets their basic living costs and ensures they have safe housing.
- Review and enhance supports to grandparents raising grandchildren and other kinship care providers, including Child in the Home of a Relative care providers. Remove administrative barriers to receiving the Canada Child Benefit for kinship care providers.
- Enhance employment assistance for newcomers, remove long-standing barriers to foreign-trained professionals accessing jobs in their field.
- Continue to prioritize new child care investments in 2023 budgets and beyond to establish universal access to a system of high-quality, inclusive child care for BC children and families that has no parent fee for low-income families and creates enough licensed child care spaces for all who choose them.
- Increase program funding and support for families raising children with disabilities and complex medical needs.
- Increase investment in public health initiatives aimed to support maternal and parental health and healthy infant development, as well as non-barriered, free, community-based programs and services for all families with young children.
- Build more social and affordable rental housing and tie rent control to the unit to remove the incentive for evictions of current tenants to raise the rent for new tenants.
- Contribute funding to establish a universal, cost-shared, healthy school food program for all K-12 students that is respectful of local contexts, connected to community and curriculum, health-promoting and sustainable.
- Ensure K-12 public education funding is sufficient to mitigate inequities between high- and low-income neighbourhoods, school districts and families and to ensure appropriate inclusion of students with diverse learning needs.
- Provide free public transit for minors ages 13-18 and free or reduced-fee transit access for low-income households.

About Us

First Call Child and Youth Advocacy Society works with a non-partisan, cross-sectoral network of affiliate organizations to put BC children and youth first in public awareness and public policy. We conduct research and analysis on child and youth rights and well-being, offer education and training events, and make policy recommendations to promote, strengthen and defend the rights of children and youth in BC.

The 2022 BC Child Poverty Report Card, maps and other materials are posted here: <http://www.firstcallbc.org>

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