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2025 REPORT CARD ON
**CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY
IN NOVA SCOTIA**

No *Real* Progress

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CAMPAIGN 2000
END CHILD & FAMILY POVERTY

2025 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Nova Scotia

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Summary

It has now been over thirty-five years since the unanimous all-party Federal resolution to end child poverty in Canada by the year 2000. Yet in 2023, **over 40,000 children in Nova Scotia were living in households below the low-income threshold (22.7 per cent)**. Nova Scotia **has ranked second-worst among all provinces and territories in reducing child poverty since 1989** (by only 7 per cent).

After two years of record-high single-year increases in child poverty, tax-filer income data for 2023 show a 4.6 per cent decrease in child poverty, from 23.8 per cent to 22.7 per cent. With **more than one in every five children** living in low-income families (40,210), we should be ashamed of the lack of real progress, especially since the child poverty rate for children under six was 24.9 per cent. While that rate is down from 26.4 per cent in 2022, it remains that **one in four children under the age of six** lived in poverty.

Nova Scotia continues to have **the highest child poverty rate in Atlantic Canada** and the **third highest provincial rate** in Canada.

Child Poverty Across Nova Scotia:

- Among communities using census divisions, child poverty rates are highest in Annapolis (35.0 per cent), Digby (34.6 per cent), and Queens (31.7 per cent). While most Census Divisions in Nova Scotia saw a reduction in child poverty in 2023, Victoria saw an increase of 10.6 per cent (to 29.3 per cent).
- Smaller geographic divisions (rural routes and postal areas) show greater variance, with one-third of postal areas reporting child poverty rates of 30 per cent or higher. The range of rates is substantial, from a low of 4.3 per cent in Upper Tantallon to a high of 60 per cent in both Goshen and Kelleys Cove.
- Higher child poverty rates in certain areas of urban Nova Scotia are masked. For example, within the Halifax postal city, rates range from 17.9 per cent (B4A codes—Bedford) to 37.6 per cent in Spryfield (B3R codes).
- Similarly, rates in the Dartmouth postal city range from 20 per cent in the Lake Charles/Micmac/Topsail area (B2X codes) to 28.9 per cent in the area that includes the North Dartmouth/Harbourview/Highfield Park/Albro Lake/Crichton Park neighbourhoods (B3A codes).
- Similar trends were observed in Sydney, with child poverty rates ranging from 14 per cent (B1L codes – Southwest Sydney) to 42.1 per cent (B1N codes – North Sydney).
- While 52.4 per cent of rural routes and postal areas for which we have data saw a decrease in child poverty between 2022 and 2023, 13.1 per cent saw no change, and the remaining 34.5 per cent saw increases. These increases were observed across the province, with the largest in Donkin (50.2 per cent increase) in Cape Breton, followed by Blockhouse (44.4 per cent increase) in Lunenburg County, and Saulnierville (43.0 per cent increase) in Digby County.

Lone-Parent Families Much Higher Risk of Poverty:

- Children in **lone-parent families** in Nova Scotia have the highest risk of poverty. In 2023, 48.7 per cent of children in lone-parent families lived in poverty, which is **four times the rate** of children who live in couple families (11.4 per cent).
- Most lone-parent families are mother-led, indicating that **gender matters** in understanding these rates; mother-led families have higher rates of child poverty than father-led families (37.8 per cent versus 28.7 per cent).
- **Family size also matters**, with the highest rate at 58.4 per cent for lone-parent families with three or more children, compared with 43.5 per cent for lone parents with one child.

Nova Scotia's Child Poverty Inequities Persist:

- We know from the 2021 Census that **Indigenous, racialized, and newcomer families experience consistently higher poverty rates**.
 - New immigrant children have double the child poverty rate (33.1 per cent) compared to non-immigrant children (15.9 per cent).
 - Child poverty for racialized families was almost double; 28.9 per cent for racialized children compared to 17.2 per cent for non-racialized children.
 - Child poverty for on-reserve Indigenous children (43.5 per cent) and off-reserve (22.4 per cent) is higher compared to non-Indigenous children (16.5 per cent).
- Based on 2023 tax filer data, we also know **that poverty rates are higher in historic Black communities and those with a higher census profile of African Nova Scotians**. The child poverty rate in North Preston (postal city) was 54.5 per cent in 2023, and 28.6 per cent in East Preston (postal city). The Rural Route B0V1A0 (Bay View) community had a child poverty rate

of 38.8 per cent, and the FSA postal code B3K (Halifax North End) had a rate of 33.3 per cent.

- There is no recent data on the number of **children with disabilities** living in poverty. Nova Scotia had the highest percentage of people with disabilities in Canada in 2023 (37.9 per cent). We also know that people with disabilities are nearly twice as likely to live in poverty as people without disabilities; Nova Scotia had the highest rate of working-aged disability poverty in Canada (19.5 per cent).

Support Helps, but is Insufficient:

- The data show that federal and provincial government income support benefits in 2023 **reduced child poverty by 40.8 per cent and lifted 27,720 children aged 0-17 out of poverty**. Without these benefits, the child poverty rate in Nova Scotia in 2022 would have been 38.4 per cent. In 2023, government transfers in **six other provinces and territories were more effective than Nova Scotia** at reducing child poverty. In the Atlantic provinces, Nova Scotia's transfers were the least effective at reducing poverty. Given that Nova Scotia **had the lowest per-capita spending on social protection in Canada**, the lack of real progress is not surprising.
- **Welfare income is inadequate** in Nova Scotia; a lone-parent family with one child is \$15,427 short of the low-income line, and total welfare income for a couple with two children is \$18,649 short.

Low Wages, High Costs Keep Families Running in Place

- Even full-time employment may not ensure income security. Consider that a lone-parent working full-time at NS's 2023 minimum of \$15/hour earns \$31,200 before tax, which is **\$18,020 below the low-income measure before tax** for a lone-parent with one child (\$49,220). **A couple with two children would need an additional \$7,208** to meet the LIM before-tax (\$69,608). If we compare the earnings from a full-time minimum wage job to the MBM for Halifax, the lone

parent would need an additional \$7,667 (needing \$38,867). Recent minimum wage increases followed a long period of neglect during which rates fell behind cost-of-living increases.

- Despite annual increases, **Nova Scotia's minimum wage is far short of the provincial living wage rates** (the lowest regional living wage rate in 2023 was \$22.85 per hour) and the gap between the two has been growing.¹

Depth of Poverty and Inequality:

- **Many low-income households with children in Nova Scotia live far below the low-income threshold—in deep poverty.** When considering the after-tax median income from all income sources and differing household sizes, we find that the income needed to reach the thresholds ranges from \$13,984 for a couple with two children (that is, \$1,165 more per month) to as much as \$15,359 for a lone-parent two-child household (\$1,322/month).
- It is also important to consider the extent of inequality among families with children, as income inequality is a critical determinant of health disparities and a marker of child well-being. In 2023, the average income of the wealthiest families in Nova Scotia with children under 18 was \$224,056/year, compared with \$10,840/year for the lowest-income families. Compared to 2022, **the average income of all census families in the lowest decile decreased by 21 per cent, while those in the highest decile increased by 4.5 per cent.**
- In 2023, **the after-tax average income for Nova Scotia families with children in the top 10% was more than 20 times greater than that of the lowest-income families (the bottom 10%).**

¹ Saulnier, C. (2023). *Living Wages in Nova Scotia 2023 update*. CCPA Nova Scotia Office.
policyalternatives.ca/news-research/living-wages-in-nova-scotia-2023-update/

Housing and Food Insecurity

- In 2023, **38 per cent of children in Nova Scotia were living in food-insecure households, representing 68,000 children.** Of the top five provinces with the highest rates of children living in food-insecure households, three of them are in Atlantic Canada (New Brunswick, 39.9 per cent; Newfoundland and Labrador, 39.9 per cent, and Nova Scotia). In 2023, compared to all households, Indigenous households had much higher food insecurity (42.4 per cent) than non-Indigenous households in Nova Scotia (28.8 per cent).
- No matter where you lived in Nova Scotia, average rents rose significantly in 2023. The province saw the highest single-year rent increase (11 per cent), four times the average historical growth rate. **While rental supply is increasing, many new units are higher-priced, and older, more affordable stock has been lost.**
- 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.**

Summary of recommendations

The federal government plays a critical role in ending child and family poverty. Campaign 2000's 2025 Child and Family Poverty in Canada Report Card² details federal policy recommendations. These recommendations are directed at the provincial government:

- Implement and fund a Poverty Elimination Plan for Nova Scotia, with targets and timelines to **end child poverty by 2031**, and immediately establish the Child and Youth Advocacy Office to monitor progress.
- **Increase family income** with a higher minimum wage, additional income assistance, and substantially expand the Nova Scotia Affordable Living Tax Credit to lift families with children out of poverty.
- Fundamentally **transform the child welfare and social assistance systems** to achieve meaningful rights-based, trauma-informed outcomes. All families on social assistance should receive no less income than what is offered to foster families.
- Realize and protect the family and children's **right to housing and food**.
- **Enhance access to universal public services**, including health care, child care, education (from primary to postsecondary) and public transit, while making essential services, such as energy and communications infrastructure, more affordable.
- With community input, **implement responsive, targeted supports to uproot all forms of discrimination, which are root causes of child poverty**, to address barriers for low-income Indigenous families, racialized newcomers, lone parents, and those raising children with disabilities, to reach their full potential.

² Campaign 2000. (Forthcoming). *Investing in Tomorrow: A Future Without Poverty*. campaign2000.ca/report-cards/national/

Introduction

For thirty-six years, governments in Canada have promised to end child poverty. In 1989, Parliament unanimously resolved that no child should grow up in poverty.

Over this period, some families faced worsening conditions, while in most years conditions changed very little. There were even a few years of dramatic improvement, with one year lifting up to half of all families out of poverty. However, in these thirty-six years, there have always been children living in poverty despite the resolution to lift them all out of it.

Progress in reducing child poverty was achieved through a significant increase in direct government investment in families, notably when the federal government created the Canada Child Benefit and significantly enhanced it. During the pandemic, when conditions could have worsened, the federal government provided a significant income benefit, leading to a historic low in child poverty in 2020. The evidence is clear and unimpeachable: government income benefits effectively reduce poverty and have lifted thousands of children out of it. Thousands remain: **40,210 in Nova Scotia. That is 40,210 too many.**

In Nova Scotia, that 1989 promise remains badly broken.

This year's Child and Family Poverty Report Card for Nova Scotia uses the most recent, comprehensive tax-filer data available for 2023. These income data are the official public record of how families lived, earned, and struggled. Governments may claim to have newer insights, but without releasing transparent, population-level evidence, those claims cannot replace public data. If conditions for children have improved, Nova Scotians deserve to see the proof.

What the evidence shows is stark. More than 40,000 children in Nova Scotia, over one in five, lived in families below the low-income threshold in 2023, and one in four among those aged six and under. Nova Scotia continues to rank among the worst-performing provinces in reducing child poverty since the 1989 commitment. After two years of record increases, the most recent decline is modest at best, and for many communities, the situation worsened.

Child poverty in Nova Scotia is not random. It is shaped by policy choices. It is higher in rural communities and specific urban neighbourhoods, and sharply concentrated among lone-parent families, Indigenous and racialized children, newcomers, and families raising children with disabilities. These patterns reflect failures in income security, wages, housing, child care, and public services – not individual behaviour.

Government support matters, but remains inadequate. Minimum wages lag far behind living costs. Income assistance leaves families tens of thousands of dollars short of meeting basic needs. Housing markets continue to force families to choose between rent and food. Nova Scotia also spends less per capita on social protection than any other province, weakening the very systems meant to protect children.

This report card is not about intentions. It is about outcomes. Nova Scotia has the fiscal capacity and policy tools to end child poverty, yet progress remains slow and uneven because the response has not matched the scale of the problem.

Ending child poverty is a matter of rights and responsibility. Children cannot thrive on announcements alone. They need sustained investment, enforceable targets, and public accountability. Until those are in place, the promise made more than three decades ago will continue to ring hollow.

Real progress means all children are supported to reach their full potential.

Children in Nova Scotia deserve better, and they deserve it now.

Measuring poverty

This report card provides the number and percentage of children (0-17 years of age), living in low-income families based on the most recent statistics.

Table 1 / Measures of child poverty
Age 0-17, Nova Scotia, 2023

	Poverty definition	
	CFLIM-AT	MBM*
Data source	T1 Family File	Canadian Income Survey
Poverty rate	22.7%	15.2%
Change from 2021	-4.6%	8.6%
Number of children in poverty	40,210	27,000

* 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.

Table 1 highlights the different estimates of child poverty from each available measure for 2023, using tax filer data, the CFLIM-AT, and the Market Basket Measure from the Canadian Income Survey (CIS). The child poverty rate, as measured by the MBM, increased in every province between 2022 and 2023.

In Nova Scotia, it was 15.2 per cent (an 8.6 per cent increase). Using the MBM measure and data, Nova Scotia has the third-highest rate among the ten provinces, and the highest in the Atlantic provinces.

The CFLIM-AT rate is 22.7 per cent, a 4.6 per cent decrease. These differences can be partially attributed to limitations in the MBM's use of the CIS. The CIS is based on a small sample and is susceptible to sampling error. Statistics Canada often reports poor data quality for child poverty in the Atlantic provinces, but in 2023 the data quality was acceptable. The CIS **excludes** people living on reserves, in congregate settings, and in very remote and rural communities. These exclusions may result in an underestimation of poverty.

The number of low-income children in Nova Scotia, as reported by these two poverty measures in 2023, was 40,210 (LIM) and 27,000 (MBM), respectively. According to the MBM, 13,210 children would not be considered to be living in poverty. However, the LIM measurement indicates that these children are living in low-income circumstances, experiencing harms and adverse outcomes, and may have been excluded from the calculation of the MBM poverty estimate due to certain populations being excluded from the Canadian Income Survey (e.g., children living on First Nations territories). **Those designing policies and programs ought to consider all available indicators of poverty and/or low income when setting poverty reduction targets.**

Appendix C provides an overview of the data sources and measures of low income and poverty (including 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** for this report card. The federal government collects the data through Statistics Canada surveys, such as the Canadian Income Survey and the Census, or by analyzing income tax filings. The data are public, though not all are available on the Statistics Canada website. Some data were purchased from Statistics Canada by Campaign 2000, and the

relevant custom tabulation reference number is provided when used.

The authors prepared the figures, tables, and related calculations for this report. Sources for the figures and tables are noted.

Second, **the authors primarily use the Census Family After-Tax Low-Income Measure (CFLIM-AT)** to calculate the low-income rate. The CFLIM-AT compares the income of a census family to that of the rest of the population with a similar family size. The CFLIM-AT is a relative measure of low income that determines 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 measure is especially valuable because it enables reporting on small communities in Nova Scotia.³

The LIM is also the most widely recognized measure of poverty internationally, as it is most strongly associated with 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.”⁴

In 2018, the federal government adopted the Market Basket Measure (MBM) as Canada’s official poverty measure. The MBM is an absolute measure of material deprivation, comparing income to the cost of goods and services required to meet a family’s basic needs and maintain a modest standard of living. Unlike the CFLIM-AT, which is a relative measure of poverty (capturing inequality) and compares income nationally, the MBM is sensitive

³ Statistics Canada. (2025). *Technical Reference Guide for the Annual Income Estimates for Census Families, Individuals and Seniors. T1 Family File, Final Estimates, 2023*. Catalogue no. 72-212-X.

www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/72-212-x/72-212-x2025001-eng.htm

⁴ UNICEF. (2013). *Child Poverty in Rich Nations*.

unicef.ca/sites/default/files/imce_uploads/DISCOVER/OUR%20WORK/ADVOCACY/DOMESTIC/POLICY%20ADVOCACY/DOCS/unicef_report_card_11.pdf

to regional differences. When poverty rates are reported annually using the MBM, data from the Canadian Income Survey (CIS) are used, as the MBM poverty rate cannot be calculated from tax filer data. The MBM was rebased in 2023, but the data are provisional, so the thresholds in this report use the 2018 ones.

The poverty thresholds for the CFLIM-AT are in Table 8 of Appendix C, and the MBM thresholds are in Table 9.

Limitations of the Data

Statistics Canada uses tax filer data to calculate low income; however, it 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 disaggregated demographic data from the national Census, which is conducted only once every five years.⁵

Unfortunately, there is no reliable data on people with disabilities living in poverty in Nova Scotia, children with disabilities, families with children with disabilities, or families where parents have disabilities. However, Disability Without Poverty and Campaign 2000 released a poverty report card in 2025, based on 2023 income data from the Canadian Income Survey.⁶ We use this data to show the poverty rates of Nova Scotian adults with disabilities. There is a need for more timely, robust, and disaggregated data collection on poverty and disabilities, particularly as it relates to families with children.

Income measures of poverty also do not reflect the complexity of poverty and well-being experienced by every 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

⁵ Statistics Canada. (2022, November 9). Disaggregated trends in poverty from the 2021 Census of Population. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/as-sa/98-200-X/2021009/98-200-X2021009-eng.cfm>

⁶ Disability without Poverty and Campaign 2000. (2025).

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.”⁷ After discussions with M’ikmaq leaders about data concerns, we have not included community on-reserve rates. First Nations governance bodies can reach out to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives - Nova Scotia Office if they would like access to the available data for their communities.

⁷ Poverty Action Research Project. 2018. *Pursuing Well-being: Lessons from the First Nation Poverty Action Research Project*, Halifax: Dalhousie University.

Nova Scotia's child poverty rate over time

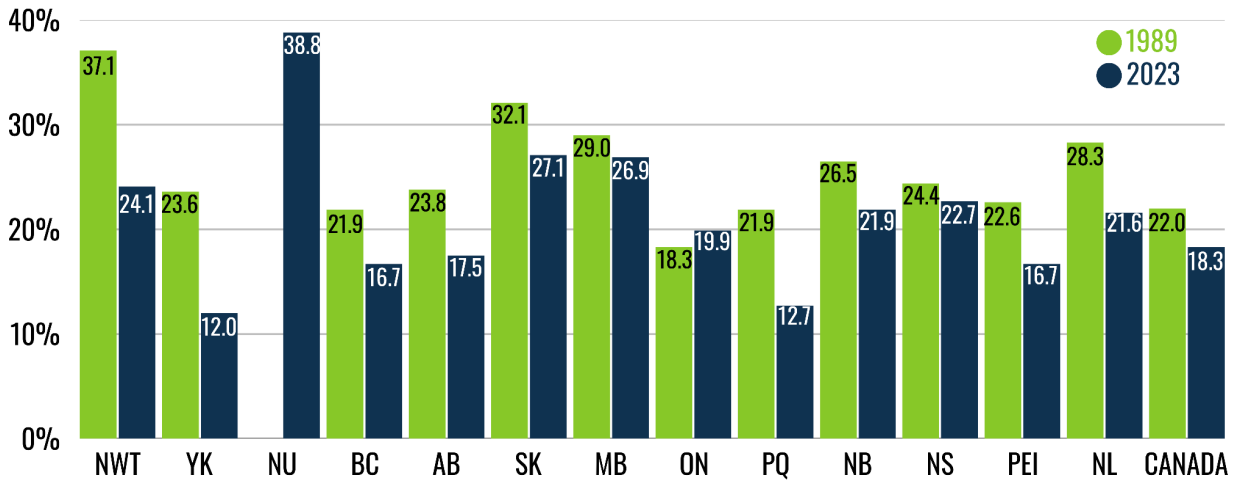
1989-2023

On 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). By 2000, the child poverty rate in Nova Scotia was higher 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, underscoring a failure of government action.

The child poverty rates 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, there were two consecutive years of record increases in 2021 and 2022 since **1989**. Figure 1 shows the overall change in child poverty rates between 1989 and 2023 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 2023, **Nova Scotia still had the third-highest provincial rate and fifth-highest child poverty rate in Canada compared to other**

provinces and territories. Nova Scotia’s ranking in Canada has been consistent over the last several years. **It has also consistently had the highest rate in Atlantic Canada.**

Figure 1 / Child poverty rates by province and territory, 1989 and 2023
Age 0-17, CFLIM-AT



Source Statistics Canada custom tabulation for the year 1989, T1 Family Files, 2023.

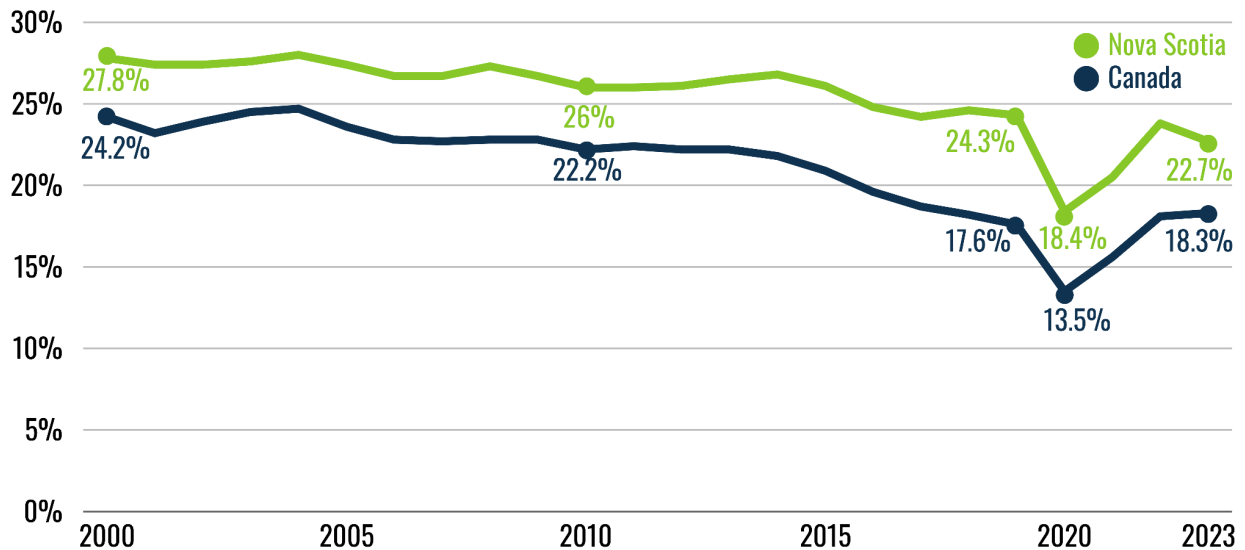
Between 1989 and 2023, the child poverty rates decreased in every province and territory except Ontario. Nova Scotia has performed the second worst in reducing child poverty from 1989 levels (reducing it by only 7 per cent). Only Ontario performed worse than Nova Scotia, and it was the only province to show 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 in child poverty rates in Nova Scotia and Canada since 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, another downward trend occurred 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 remained persistently higher here and have not steadily declined in the same way. Between 2017 and 2019, while Nova Scotia had a higher poverty

rate than the Canadian average, the gap widened (from 5 per cent to 6.7 per cent). Like the rest of Canada, Nova Scotia saw a dramatic drop in child poverty in 2020. The Nova Scotia rate increased in both 2021 and 2022, as it did in provinces and territories across Canada. This year, child poverty in Nova Scotia decreased slightly (4.6 per cent), while it increased slightly across Canada (1.1 per cent). Child poverty in Nova Scotia in 2023 is still slightly lower than in 2019 (22.7 per cent compared to 24.3 per cent). Data from tax filers show 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.

Figure 2 / Child poverty rates, Nova Scotia and Canada, 2000 to 2023
Age 0-17, CFLIM-AT



Source: Statistics Canada, T1 Family Files, 2000-2023.

Child poverty across Nova Scotia

Poverty is unevenly distributed across geographic communities. While poverty rates tend to be higher in Canadian urban areas due to higher costs of living, disaggregated poverty data at small geographies show that both rural and urban areas in Nova Scotia experience high poverty rates. 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.

Child poverty by Census Division

Table 2 presents child poverty rates by Census Division in Nova Scotia. The lowest rates were in Antigonish (18.3 per cent) and Halifax (18.9 per cent). The highest rates were in Annapolis (35.0 per cent), Digby (34.6 per cent), Queens (31.7 per cent) and Cape Breton (31.5 per cent). Most Census Divisions in Nova Scotia saw modest reductions in child poverty from 2022, including Hants (8.7 per cent decrease), Inverness (7.8 per cent decrease) and Antigonish (6.6 per cent decrease). However, five Census Divisions saw marginal or modest increases, including Victoria (10.6 per cent), Guysborough (6 per cent), and Richmond (4.2 per cent).

Table 2 / Child poverty by Census Division
Rate, number, and per cent change from previous year, in 2023

Census Division	Child Poverty Rate	Number of low-income children	Change from 2022
Annapolis	35.0	1140	1.7%
Antigonish	18.3	700	-6.6%
Cape Breton	31.5	5420	-2.8%
Colchester	23.6	2230	-4.5%
Cumberland	28.6	1500	-5.0%
Digby	34.6	930	-4.2%
Guysborough	30.0	330	6.0%
Halifax	18.9	15610	-6.0%
Hants	21.0	2110	-8.7%
Inverness	22.5	670	-7.8%
Kings	21.5	2510	-6.5%
Lunenburg	23.6	1810	-1.3%
Pictou	25.0	2020	-4.2%
Queens	31.7	520	0.6%
Richmond	27.5	420	4.2%
Shelburne	28.5	690	-1.7%
Victoria	29.3	390	10.6%
Yarmouth	27.5	1220	-1.8%

Source: Statistics Canada, Income Statistics Division, T1 Family File, 2023.

Child poverty rates by postal area

Appendix A (Table 5) 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 5 had child poverty rates of 30 per cent and higher. The range of rates is quite significant, from a low of 4.3 per cent in Upper Tantallon to a high of 60 per cent in both Goshen and Kelleys Cove.

While 52.4 per cent of rural routes and postal areas saw a decrease in child poverty between 2022 and 2023, 13.1 per cent saw no change, while the rest (34.5 per cent) saw increases. The greatest increases were seen in rural communities across the province, including Donkin (50.2 per cent increase) in Cape Breton county, Blockhouse (44.4 per cent increase) in Lunenburg County, and Saulnierville (43.0 per cent increase) in Digby County.

It should also be noted that postal cities for urban areas of the province (Halifax, Dartmouth, and Sydney) reported in Appendix A (Table 6) 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, rates ranged from 17.9 per cent (B4A codes—Bedford) to a high of 37.6 per cent in Spryfield (B3R codes) and 33.3 per cent in the South End Peninsula (B3H codes). Similarly, rates ranged in the Dartmouth postal city from 20 per cent in the Lake Charles/Micmac/Topsail area (B2X codes) to 28.9 per cent in the area that includes North Dartmouth/Harbourview/ Highfield Park/Albro Lake/Crichton Park neighbourhoods (B3A codes). Similar trends were observed in Sydney, with rates of child poverty ranging from 14 per cent (B1L codes – Southwest Sydney) to 42.1 per cent (B1N codes – North Sydney).

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 was 18.9 per cent, but the federal riding also named Halifax was 24.5 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 showed a rate of 26.7 per cent, but we know the rate for communities within it varies. **It is thus important to consider the purposes for which you are using geographic boundaries and to be clear about how policies and programs reach people depending on where they live.**

Child poverty for different children

Some 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 poverty rate was not experienced uniformly.

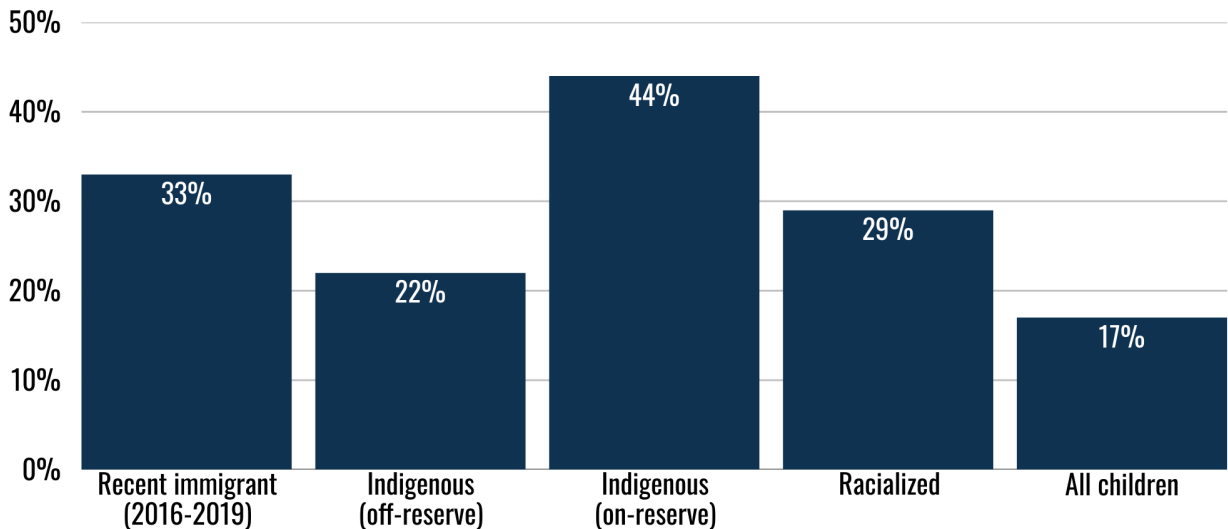
Racialized, immigrant, and Indigenous children

Figure 3 presents Census data showing higher poverty rates among 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 show higher low-income rates among new immigrant children (33.1 per cent) compared with non-immigrant children (15.9 per cent), and higher rates for on-reserve Indigenous children (43.5 per cent) and off-reserve Indigenous children (22.4

per cent) compared with non-Indigenous children (16.5 per cent).

Tax filer data shows that in 2023, 47.3 per cent of children living on eight reserves in Nova Scotia lived in poverty.⁸

Figure 3 / Child poverty rate by different groups
Nova Scotia, 2020 (based on 2021 Census), LIM-AT



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, higher child poverty rates are evident in postal geographies where census profiles for communities indicate larger populations of African Nova Scotians. For example, the child poverty rate in North Preston (postal city) in 2023 was 54.5 per cent, and 28.6 per cent in East Preston. Though rates in both regions had been rising since 2020, between 2022 and 2023 they decreased (18.3 per cent and 30.1 per cent, respectively). The Rural Route B0V1A0 (Bay View/Digby) community had a child poverty rate of 38.8 per cent, and the FSA postal code B3K (Halifax North End) had a rate of 33.3 per cent.

While the 2021 Census data shows that the child poverty rate for on-reserve Indigenous children was 43.5 per cent overall.

⁸ First Nations governance bodies can reach out to the CCPA Nova Scotia Office to request more specific data for their reserve.

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 nearly twice as likely to live in poverty as people without disabilities.⁹ Nova Scotia has the second lowest welfare income for an unattached single person living with disabilities (\$12,406/year).¹⁰ In fact, the total welfare income for this group decreased by 2.2 per cent from 2022 to 2023. Campaign 2000's 2025 Disability Poverty Report Card reported that in 2023, Nova Scotia had the highest proportion of people with disabilities (37.9 per cent) for those 15 years and older in Canada, and the highest rate of poverty for those of working age with disabilities (19.5 per cent).

Poverty and young children

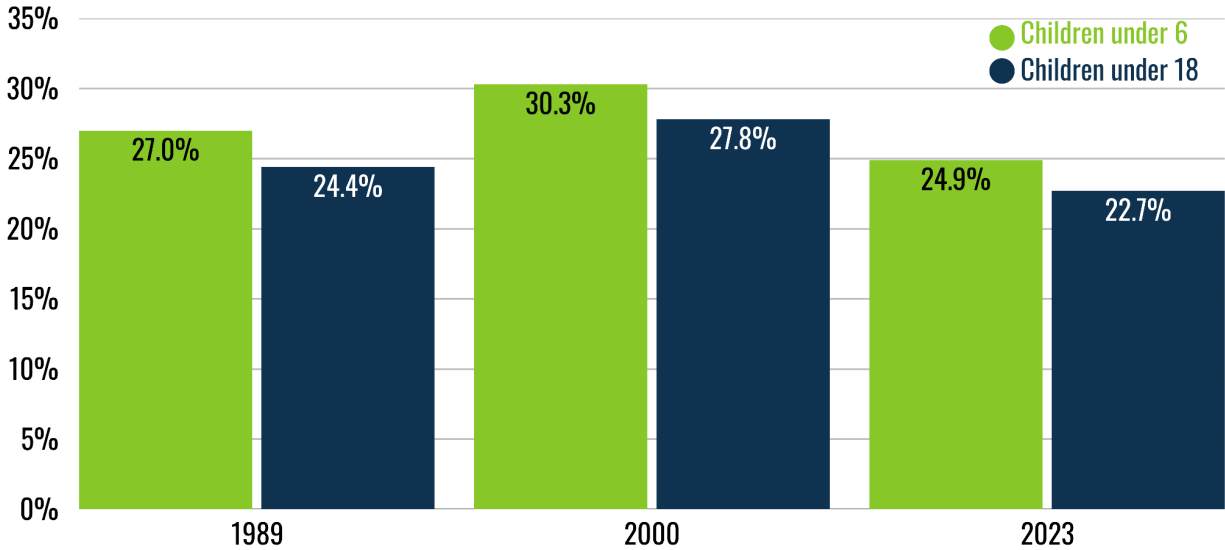
Figure 4 shows the child poverty rate for children under six in 1989, 2000, and 2023. It demonstrates that **poverty rates for younger Nova Scotian children were higher in all three years** (a persistent trend across all of our report cards) than they were for all children under 18. In 2023, the child poverty rate for children under 6 was 24.9 per cent, more than one in four young children, compared to 22.7 per cent of all children.

⁹ Disability without Poverty and Campaign 2000. (2025). *Disability Poverty Report Card 2025. Too Little for Too Few: Ending Disability Poverty in Canada.* disabilitywithoutpoverty.ca/sites/default/files/2025-12/2025%20disability%20poverty%20report%20card%20-%20final%20english_0.pdf

¹⁰ Laidley, J., Tabbara, M. (2024). *Welfare in Canada, 2023.* Maytree. maytree.com/wp-content/uploads/Welfare_in_Canada_2023.pdf

Figure 4 / Child poverty rate for children under 6 compared to all children, 1989, 2000, and 2023

Nova Scotia, CFLIM-AT



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

Child poverty for different families

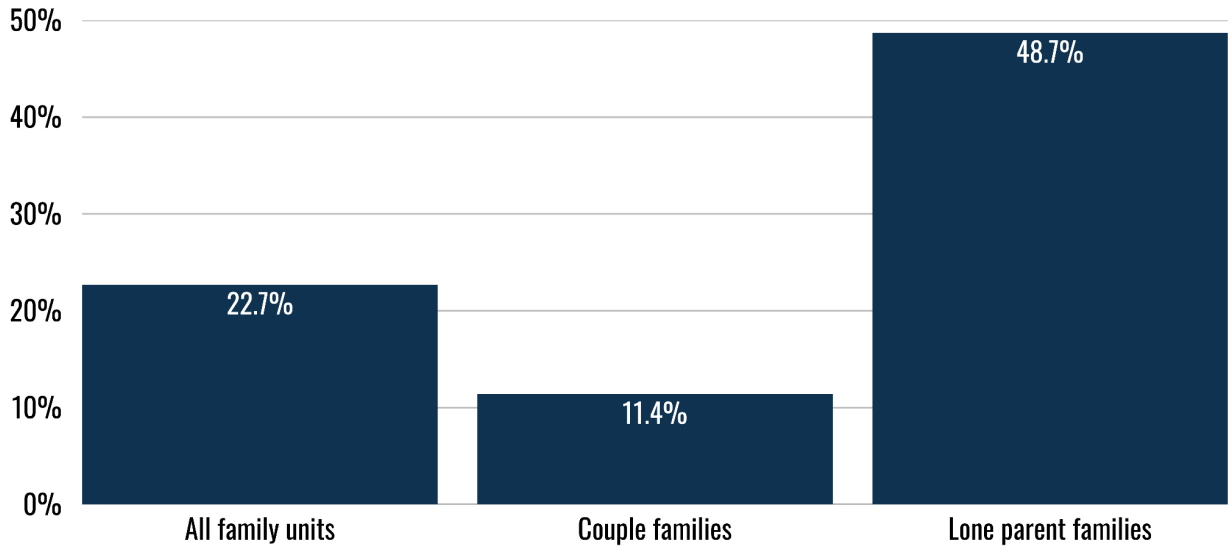
Family type

Figure 5 shows that children in lone-parent families are much more likely to live in poverty than those in couple families. In 2023, 48.7 per cent of children in lone-parent families in Nova Scotia lived below the CFLIM-AT (14,220 children), compared with 11.4 per cent of children in couple families (24,760 children). The child poverty rate in lone-parent families has slightly decreased since last year, from 50.4 per cent, but has increased by 35 per cent since 2020 (when it was 35 per cent).

The 2021 Census (which reports 2020 income data) tells 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**.¹¹

¹¹ Statistics Canada. Table 98-10-0100-01: Low-income status by age, census family characteristics and household type, 2021 Census—based on income data from 2020.

Figure 5 / Child poverty rate by family type
Nova Scotia, 2023, CFLIM-AT



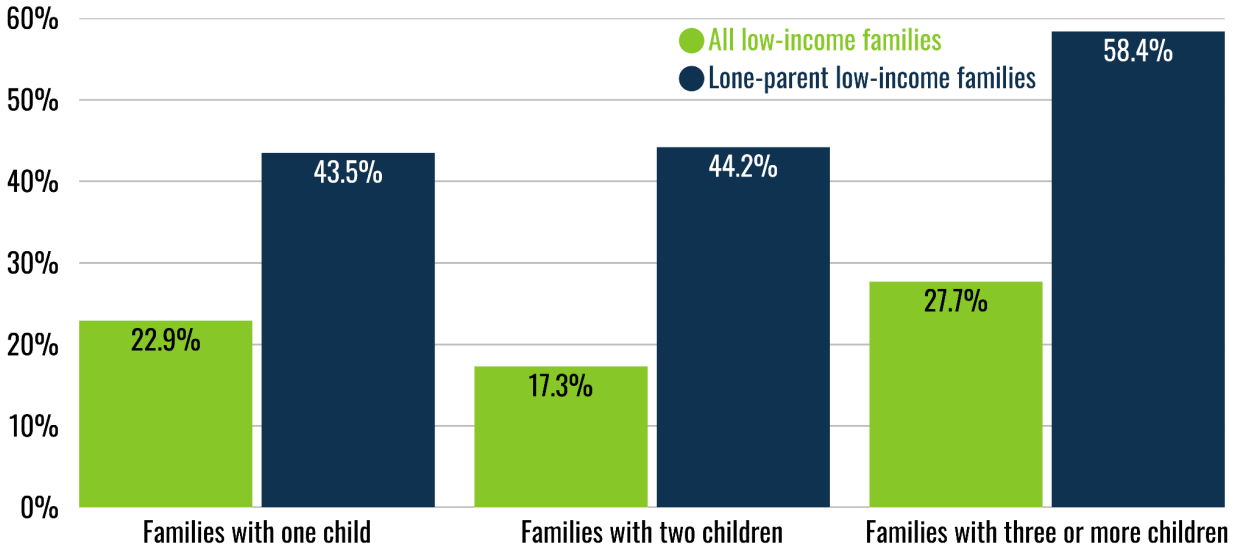
Source Statistics Canada—2021 Census. Tables 98-10-0314-01 and 98-10-0332-01, and Custom Tabulation, R23083.

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 27.7 per cent, compared to 22.9 per cent for families with only one child and 17.3 per cent for families with two children. For lone-parent families, the child poverty rate rose with each additional child (43.5 per cent in families with one child, 44.2 per cent for families with two children, and 58.4 per cent in lone-parent families with three or more).

Figure 6 / Child poverty rate by family size

Nova Scotia, 2023, LIM-AT



Source: Statistics Canada, Income Statistics Division, T1 Family File, 2023.

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.¹² 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.¹³

Comparing the income of the wealthiest 10% of families with that of middle- and low-income families shows income inequality across the population. Table 3 shows the average 2023 income of the wealthiest families in Nova Scotia with children under 18 (\$224,056/year) compared to the average income of the lowest-income families (\$10,840/year). Families in the middle decile had an average income of \$78,192. Compared to 2022, the

¹² UNICEF Canada. (2019). A Bold and Achievable Framework to Lift Canada’s Children out of Poverty. UNICEF Canada Policy Brief Bill C-97. sencanada.ca/content/sen/committee/421/SOCI/Briefs/UNICEFCanada_e.pdf

¹³ UNICEF. (2016). Fairness for Children: A league table of inequality in child well-being in rich countries, Innocenti Report Card no. 13, UNICEF Office of Research—Innocenti, Florence. www.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/RC13-ENG-FINAL.pdf

average income of all census families in the lowest decile decreased by 21 per cent, while those in the highest decile increased by 4.5 per cent.

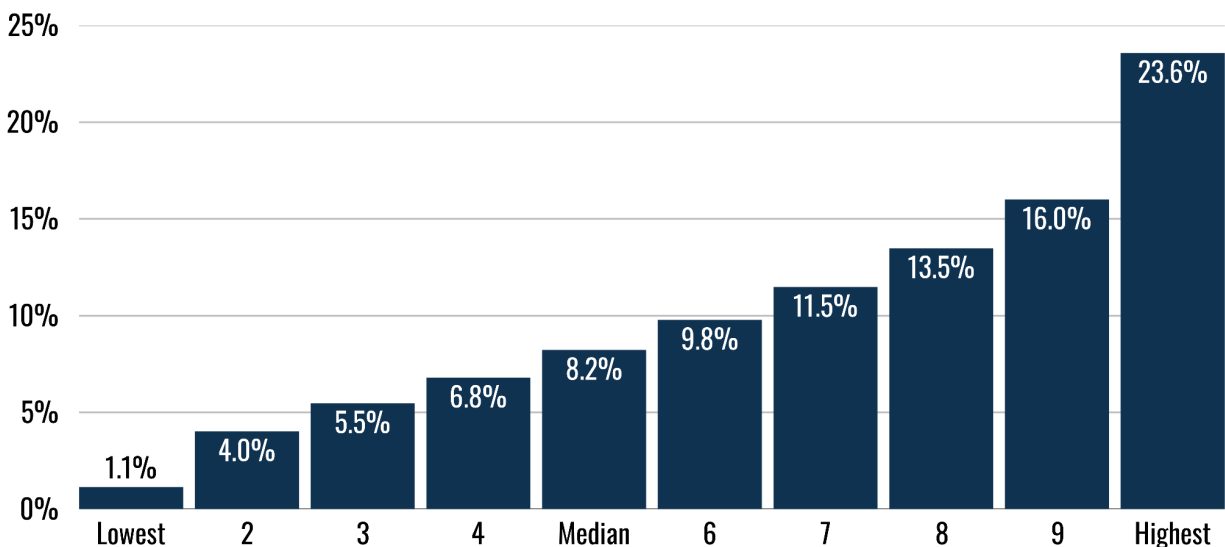
Figure 7 shows that families with children in the highest decile held a 23.6 per cent share of after-tax income in the province, while the bottom 50% of families combined held a 25.7 per cent share of total income. Families with children in the lowest decile held 1.1 per cent of after-tax income earned in Nova Scotia. In 2023, **the after-tax average income for Nova Scotia families with children in the top decile was more than 20 times higher than the average income in the bottom 10%.**

Table 3 / Average income for Nova Scotia families with children under 18
Highest, median and lowest decile by family type, after tax, 2023

Families with children under 18	Lowest decile	Median (5th decile)	Highest decile
All census families	\$10,840	\$78,192	\$224,056
Couple families	\$26,879	\$101,708	\$244,692
All lone-parent families	\$6,902	\$43,162	\$106,973
Man-led lone-parent families	\$6,639	\$47,325	\$121,530
Woman-led lone-parent families	\$6,954	\$42,621	\$104,240

Source Statistics Canada (2025). T1 Family File, Custom Tabulation, R23083.

Figure 7 / Distribution of income for Nova Scotia families with children under 18
Per cent share after tax, by decile, 2023



Source Statistics Canada (2025). T1 Family File, Custom Tabulation, R23083.

Table 3 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 2023 (4,150 compared to 26,760, respectively), those in the lowest income decile had lower average incomes than mother-led lone-parent families. Except for the lowest income decile, mother-led families had lower average incomes than father-led families.

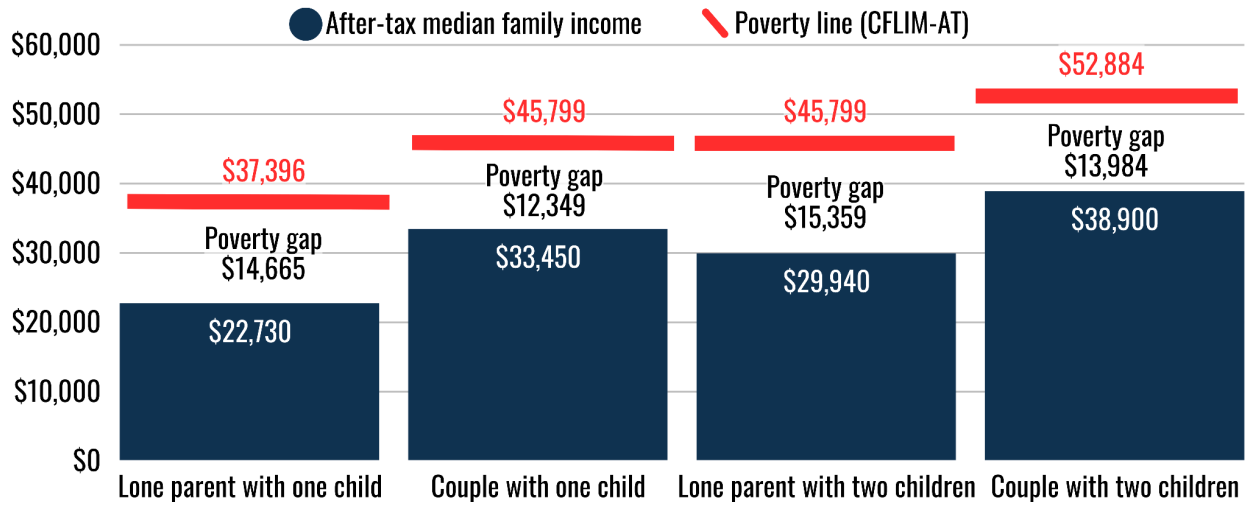
Figure 7 shows the income distribution for Nova Scotian households with children. **Those in the highest decile have a similar share of income as those in the five lowest deciles.** Those in the bottom 50 percent of income holders hold 25.6 per cent of the income, while those in the top 10% hold 23.6 per cent.

Depth of poverty

Depth of poverty refers to how far below the poverty threshold incomes fall. Figure 8 shows that many low-income families live far below the CFLIM-AT poverty threshold. In 2023, the after-tax median incomes from all income sources for low-income families of different sizes were significantly below the CFLIM-AT. For example, low-income couple families with two children in Nova Scotia had a median income of \$38,900, \$13,984 below the CFLIM-AT poverty line (only 74 per cent of the poverty threshold). These families would need an extra \$1,165/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 \$12,349 and \$15,859, respectively. Lone-parent, two-child families would need an extra \$1,322/month to reach the CFLIM-AT poverty threshold. The shortfall in incomes needed to reach the poverty line (based on the median income of low-income households) has increased since 2021 for all these family types, as shown 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 2023

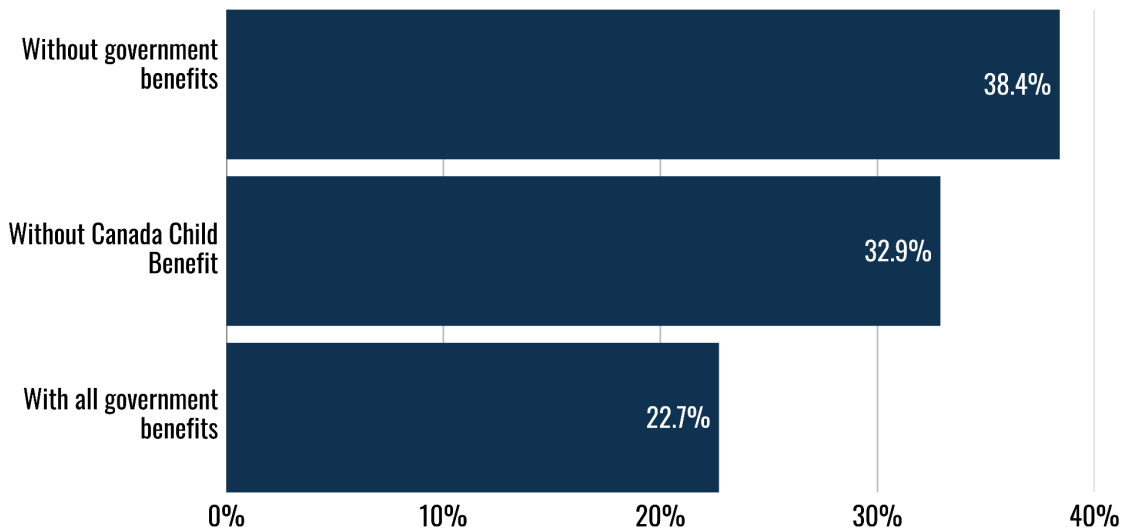


Source: Statistics Canada Table 11-10-0018-01. After-tax status of tax filers and dependents based on Census Family Low Income Measure (CFLIM-AT), by family type and family composition, 2023; Median income: T1FF, Table 11-10-0020-01.

Government income benefits reduce poverty

Figure 9 shows that government income benefits to individuals and families in 2023 effectively prevented 27,720 children from poverty (40.8 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, 38.4 per cent of children would have been living in poverty in 2023 (67,930 children).

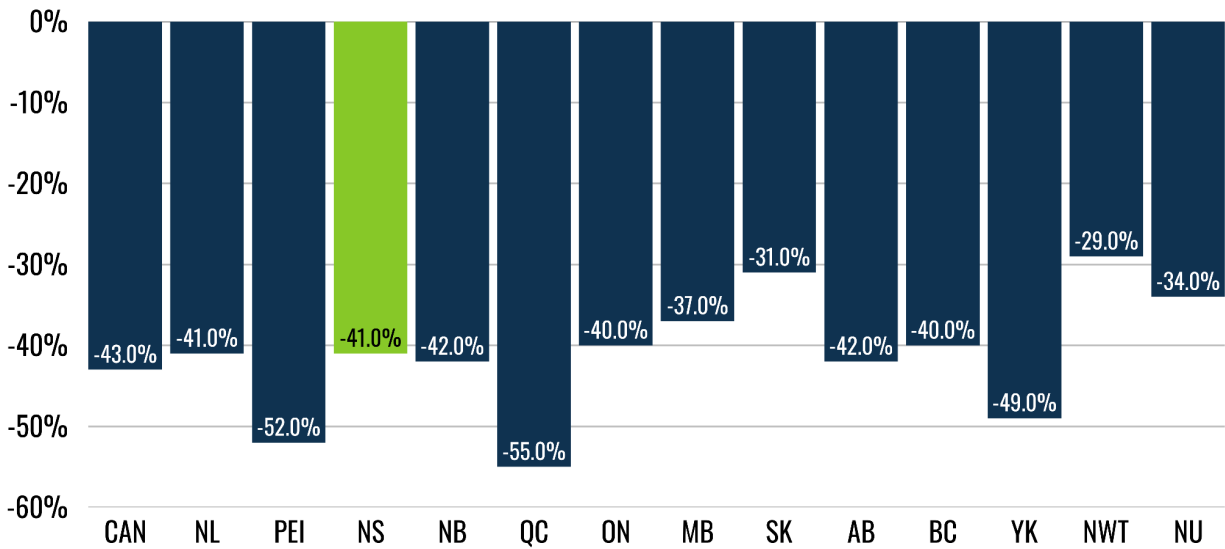
Figure 9 / Impact of government transfers on child poverty rate
Age 0-17, Nova Scotia, 2023, CFLIM-AT



Source Statistics Canada (2025), T1 Family File, 2023, Custom Tabulation, R23083.

Figure 9 also shows that the child poverty rate in Nova Scotia would have been 32.9 per cent (instead of 22.7 per cent) without the Canada Child Benefit (CCB), reducing child poverty by 31.0 per cent. The federal CCB alone prevented 18,040 children from living in poverty, and this intervention is responsible for 65.1 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.

Figure 10 / Reduction in child poverty due to government income supports by province and territory
2023, CFLIM-AT



Source Statistics Canada (2025), T1 Family File, 2023, Custom Tabulation, R23083.

Last year's report card showed that government transfers reduced poverty by 40.5 per cent in Nova Scotia in 2022 and lifted just over 28,000 children out of poverty. In 2023, government transfers prevented 27,720 children from falling into poverty (a 40.8 per cent reduction). Figure 10 shows the percentage reduction in child poverty in each province and territory due to total government transfers (federal and provincial). **Six provinces and territories were more effective than Nova Scotia in reducing child poverty. Nova Scotia's poverty reduction efforts were the least effective among the Atlantic provinces.**

Food and housing insecurity

Food insecurity and children in Nova Scotia

Food insecurity, defined as a lack of access to food because of financial constraints,¹⁴ is argued to be a more sensitive measure of material deprivation than income.¹⁵ While income is the strongest predictor of food security status, other factors that create financial constraints within households, such as climbing rental rates, changes in income sources such as maternity or parental leaves that cause lower incomes, debt payments, budget shocks (i.e., spikes in energy and other basic needs costs, emergencies), or having few protective assets,¹⁶ can increase the odds of food insecurity.

Figure 11 shows the percentage of children (0-17 years) living in food insecure households in the ten provinces based on the 2023

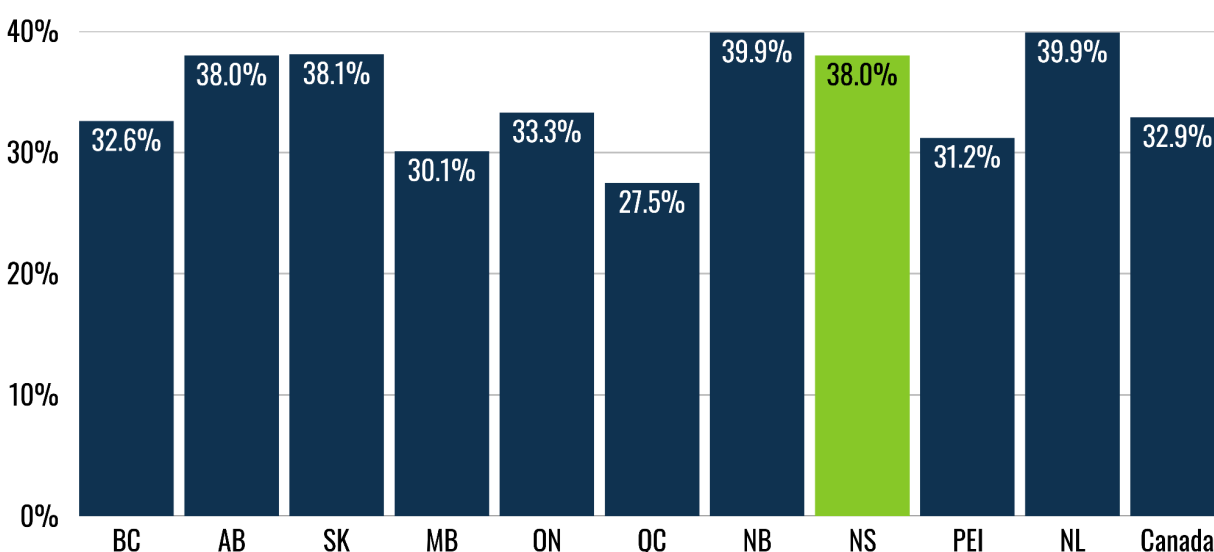
¹⁴ Anderson SA. 1990. "Core indicators of nutritional state for difficult-to-sample populations." *Journal of Nutrition*, 120:1559–1600.

¹⁵ Tarasuk, Valerie, Andrée-Anne Fafard St-Germain and Rachel Loopstra. 2020. "The relationship between food banks and food insecurity: Insights from Canada." *Voluntas* 31: 841-852.

¹⁶ PROOF. (n.d.). Who are most at risk of household food insecurity? proof.utoronto.ca/food-insecurity/who-are-most-at-risk-of-household-food-insecurity/

Canadian Income Survey (data collected in early 2024).¹⁷ Despite a lower prevalence of children living in food insecurity (a reduction of 6 per cent from the previous year), Nova Scotia still ties with Alberta, having the third-highest rate in Canada. 38 per cent of children were living in food-insecure households. Notably, these numbers would exclude on-reserve children.

Figure 11 / Children under 18 living in food-insecure households by province 2023



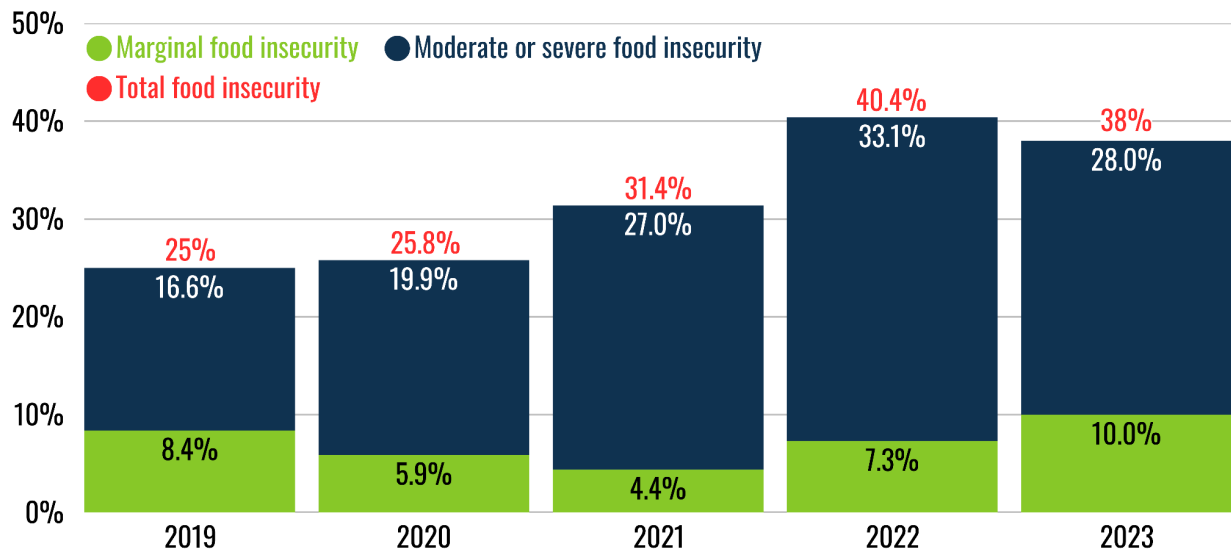
Note CIS interviews which collect food insecurity data are completed in the calendar year after the survey reference year.

Source: Canadian Income Survey 2023. Statistics Canada Table 13-10-0835-01.

Figure 12 shows the prevalence of children living in food insecure households in Nova Scotia from 2019 to 2023. Between 2022 and 2023, there was a slight reduction, but the rate is still greater than pre-Covid rates, having grown by 52 per cent since 2019. In 2023, 68,000 children lived in food insecure households, up from 41,000 children in 2019.

¹⁷ The 2023 Canadian Income survey reports food insecurity data from early 2024.

Figure 12 / Children under 18 living in food-insecure households, 2019-2023
Canadian Income Survey, Nova Scotia



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

Source Canadian Income Survey 2023. Statistics Canada Table 13-10-0835-01.

Housing insecurity and children in Nova Scotia

No matter where you lived in Nova Scotia, average rents rose significantly in 2023. The province saw the highest single-year rent increase (11 per cent), four times the average historical growth rate. 2023 was the third year the vacancy rate had been at one per cent, and it had been under three per cent since 2016. We also know that the vacancy rate for more affordable apartments (below \$1,300 for a two-bedroom) was well below one per cent, and turnover for those units reached a seven-year low. **While rental supply is increasing, many new units are higher-priced, and older, more affordable stock has been lost.**

Nova Scotia did introduce a rental assistance subsidy¹⁸ in 2021, and was previously available for households who spent 30 per cent or more of their pre-tax income on the average rent in their region (not their actual rent). In April 2023, this was changed to only be available for those who spend 50 per cent or more.¹⁹ The Nova Scotia Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs at the time, stated that this change was because there was an increased demand for the program. The program eligibility once again changed in 2024 – recipients must spend 40 per cent of their monthly income on the average rent in their area to receive the benefit.²⁰

These rent subsidies are helping people, however, they are far from automatic to access, even when eligibility is confirmed. More needs to be done to ensure that people can find suitable housing and not fear losing it. 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.

The historic increases in average rent of 11 per cent in 2023, 4.6 per cent in 2024, and 6.6 per cent in 2025,²¹ suggests that the rent cap introduced by the province needs to be strengthened.

¹⁸ Government of Nova Scotia. (n.d.). *Canada-Nova Scotia Targeted Housing Benefit*. novascotia.ca/apply-rent-supplement-canada-nova-scotia-targeted-housing-benefit

¹⁹ Cooke, A., King, M. (2023). "On the Brink: Nova Scotia has a rent subsidy program. Here's how it works." Global News. globalnews.ca/news/10179883/on-the-brink-rent-subsidy-program/

²⁰ Hampshire, G. (2024). "Rent supplement changes coming after hundreds in N.S. receive more than their actual rent." CBC News. cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/rent-supplement-formula-lohr-threshold-1.7305382

²¹ CMHC. Housing Market Information Portal.

Children in Families Receiving Welfare Income

Families deserve enough income support to feed, house, and clothe their children, to support healthy child development and not just survival.²² Yet, a hundred percent of families that rely on government support as their only source of income live far below all poverty lines. The inadequacy of welfare income is highlighted by the fact that 29.3 per cent of food bank users in Nova Scotia listed social assistance as their primary source of income.²³

It is notable that Nova Scotia **had the lowest per-capita spending on social protection in Canada in 2023 and in 2024.**²⁴ Social protection is defined as “the systematic intervention intended to relieve households and individuals of the burden of a defined set of social risks.”²⁵ These risks can arise because of increased household expenses or because of reduced income (or a combination), due to sickness, unemployment, retirement, housing, education, or family circumstances.

²²Laidley, J., Tabbara, M. (2024). Op Cit.

²³ Food Banks Canada. (2025) “User statistics - NS.”

foodbankscanada.ca/hunger-in-canada/hungercount/user-statistics/ns/

²⁴ Statistics Canada. (2026). *Table 10-10-0005-01 Canadian Classification of Functions of Government by consolidated government component (x 1,000,000) (2024 data)*. www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1010000501

²⁵ International Monetary Fund. (2014). *Government Finance Statistics Manual*. imf.org/external/pubs/ft/gfs/manual/2014/gfsfinal.pdf

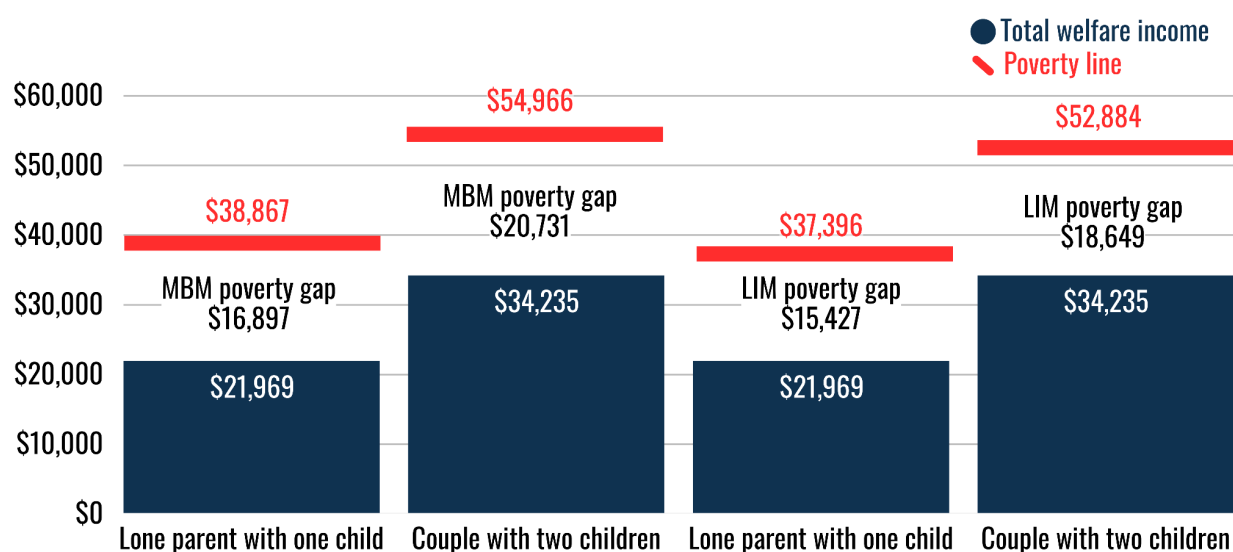
Nova Scotia spent \$1,308 per capita on social protection, of which **\$176 per capita is spent on families and children**, and \$76 on poverty (social exclusion) in 2024. These are far below the Canadian 2024 averages of \$2,703 of which \$792 is on families and children. These changed little since 2023, with small increases of \$78 and \$18 for families with children, and \$14 for social exclusion.

The amount of welfare income available for families in Nova Scotia leaves them without sufficient income when compared to the CFLIM or the MBM. Figure 13 illustrates that gap using data on welfare income for 2023 to compare to the poverty data being used in this report card.²⁶ Depending on which measure is used, and the household size, a family may be facing a gap of between \$15,427 and \$20,731. These gaps mean that these families are only provided a portion of what is needed; 59 per cent and 65 per cent using the CFLIM. According to the MBM, these families are in deep poverty, accessing less than 75 per cent of the amount needed to cover the costs of essentials; with the lone parent and one child family receiving 57 per cent and the couple with two children receiving 62 per cent. **The support provided to the lone parent with one child family is the least compared** to all other provinces.

²⁶ Laidley, J., Tabbara, M. (2024). *Welfare in Canada, 2023*. Maytree.

Figure 13 / Welfare income poverty gap by family type and size

Adequacy of welfare incomes based on MBM and CFLIM, Nova Scotia, 2023



Source Welfare in Canada 2023, Maytree (2024), and Statistics Canada Table 11-10-0066-01.

As is outlined in Table 4, the welfare income from the Maytree report includes provincial and federal sources. For Nova Scotia, the income includes the basic support provided through the Employment Support and Income Assistance program as well as any recurring additional social assistance payments. It is assumed that no household has employment income and that the single parent’s child is two years old (the couple’s children are aged ten and 15). **In 2023, no changes were made to basic social assistance.**

Table 4 / Welfare income component parts

Nova Scotia, 2023

Income component	Single parent, one child	Couple, two children
Basic Nova Scotia social assistance	\$11,544	\$16,716
Additional Nova Scotia social assistance	\$0	\$240
Federal child benefits	\$7,217	\$12,178
Provincial child benefits	\$1,400	\$2,800
Federal tax credits/benefits	\$1,494	\$1,926
Provincial tax credits/benefits	\$315	\$375
Total income	\$21,969	\$34,235

Source Welfare in Canada 2023, Maytree (2024).

Also included in Table 4 are recurring automatic additional social assistance payments, which in 2023 was the School Supplies Supplement. This supplement was increased from \$50 to \$60 for those aged five to 12, and from \$100 to \$160 for those aged 13 to 18.

Families on income assistance also receive the Nova Scotia Child Benefit with monthly amounts that **increased to \$20.83 per month** per child (for the first child). Beginning in July 2023, the government provided a \$250 increase a year for the first child and each additional child for families earning less than \$26,000 and an increase of \$250 for the first child and \$125 for each additional child for those earning between \$26,000 and \$33,999. In the previous two years (2021 and 2022), the annual payment for families at the lowest income level increased by \$600 per child.²⁷ The families whose adjusted family net income is below \$26,000 receive \$1,525 annually for each child they have, where families whose net income is above \$26,000, and below \$34,000, receive \$1,525 annually for the first child and half the rate (\$762.50) for the second and subsequent children.²⁸

These families also receive the Nova Scotia Affordable Living Tax Credit of \$255 per adult and \$60 per child, unchanged in 2023 or 2024 or 2025. Note that the Nova Scotia Poverty Reduction Tax Credit is not included in this table because it is for families without children.

Federal changes in 2023 including the inflationary adjustments to the Canada Child Benefit and to the HST Credit, as well as the Grocery Rebate (a one time-GST credit payment). In July 2023 Nova Scotians became eligible for the federal climate action incentive of \$310 for the lone parent with one child and \$496 for the couple with two children.

In 2023, accounting for inflation, **total annual welfare income for the lone parent with one child declined (three per cent)** from 2022 because of the loss of the cost-of-living and Hurricane-Fiona

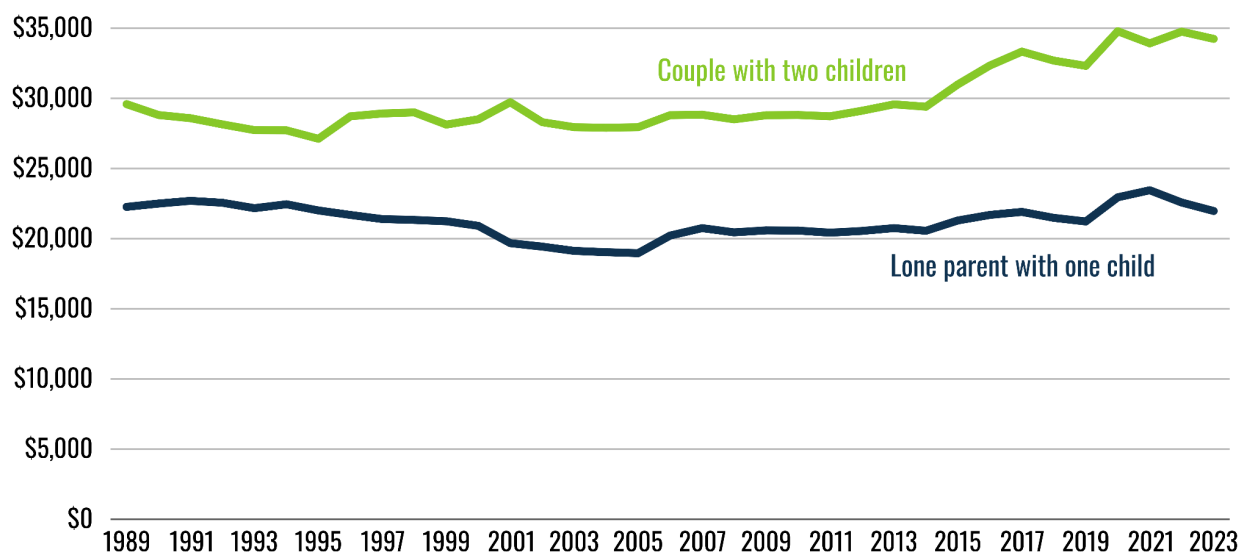
²⁷ Government of Nova Scotia. (2023). "Increase in Nova Scotia Child Benefit." news.novascotia.ca/en/2023/06/30/increase-nova-scotia-child-benefit

²⁸ Government of Nova Scotia. (n.d.). "Nova Scotia Child Benefit." novascotia.ca/coms/families/ChildBenefit.html

related payments, and the increase in inflation. **Welfare income of the couple with two children also decreased by one per cent in 2023 in real dollars.**

Figure 14 / Total annual welfare income by family type, 1989-2023

Nova Scotia



Note Values are in constant 2023 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 2023, Maytree (2024).

Rent Supplements

The one significant income support not included in Table 4 for the purposes of welfare income are rent subsidies. Maytree does not include them because they only include payments that are automatic and recurring. Introduced in 2021, the Canada-Nova Scotia Targeted Housing Benefit (CNSTHB) is a direct monthly subsidy to renters if they spend more than 40% of their pre-tax income on housing costs (up to the average market rent in their area) (and if awarded must be renewed annually).²⁹

²⁹ Government of Nova Scotia. (n.d.). "Canada-Nova Scotia Targeted Housing Benefit." novascotia.ca/apply-rent-supplement-canada-nova-scotia-targeted-housing-benefit

For renters who are able to access this benefit, it is a significant support to them, providing income to cover the difference between the tenant's portion of the rent and either average market rent 95% of it for tenants 58 years of age and older. However, there are many barriers to accessing this rental support and many problems with its design.³⁰ The program is estimated to have helped 8,000 in 2023 (that was the capped number), 8,500 households in fiscal year 2024-25 (and fewer in 2025-2026 with narrowed eligibility).

While the rent support program is not included in this table as part of welfare income, **it is reportable (though not taxable) for income tax** and thus would be included in calculating the poverty rate using the income tax data and the CFLIM.

What has happened to income support for families with children since 2023:

The Nova Scotia government did finally begin³¹ indexing income assistance to inflation, which is something we have been calling for them to do for decades. However, as can be seen in Figure 14, the base had largely been eroding for the past twenty years,³² particularly for lone parents. In 2023, total annual welfare income for a lone parent with one child was up to \$21,969, **which was \$294 less than what they received in 1989** (\$22,263). The total annual welfare income for a couple family with two children was \$29,584 in 1989. In 2013, they reached 1989 levels again, receiving \$29,570. In 2023, they received \$34,235, a \$4,651 increase from 1989.

³⁰ Leviten-Reid, C., Digou, M., & Kennelly, J. (2025). Housing as a human right, rent supplements and the new Canada Housing Benefit. *Housing Studies*, 40(3), 565–588. doi.org/10.1080/02673037.2024.2307595

³¹ Government of Nova Scotia. (2024). "Province Indexing Income Assistance Rates." news.novascotia.ca/en/2024/03/27/province-indexing-income-assistance-rates

³² The most significant difference has been for people with disabilities, with a 21.9 per cent increase in income support from 2023 to 2024. An additional \$300 per month was provided in April 2024 for income assistance recipients with disabilities or serious medical conditions to help with the added costs of living with a disability.

The inflationary adjustment to basic income assistance effective April 2024 to July 2025, was the first increase in three years and was worth **between \$9 and \$35 a month more**, depending on household composition.³³ The rate being used for 2024-25 was 2.5 per cent. How the rate of 2.5 per cent was chosen for 2024-25 is unclear. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose 3.9 per cent in 2023, (following a 6.8 per cent increase in 2022 and a 3.4 per cent increase in 2021).³⁴ Nova Scotia’s all items index increased four per cent in 2023, but food price inflation averaged 7.9 per cent in 2023 and rent increased by an average of ten per cent.³⁵ All other provincial income supports are not adjusted to inflation.

Table 5 / Total 2024 welfare incomes in Nova Scotia, and changes since 2023

	Unattached single considered employable	Unattached single with a disability	Lone parent with one child	Couple with two children
Total welfare income 2024	\$9,415	\$15,117	\$22,710	\$35,482
Change from 2023	2.3%	21.9%	3.4%	3.6%

Source Welfare in Canada 2024, Maytree (2025).

The province also provided a special top-up to the school supplement program in 2024; for children aged 13 to 18 of \$40, and an extra \$20 for those aged five to 12 and \$100 for children who turn four by the end of December and are eligible for pre-primary in the fall. The 2023 increase was made permanent in 2024; families with children aged 13 to 18 will receive \$200, and \$100 for those with children aged five to 12. Dependent children attending pre-primary who turn four by December 31 and dependent youth aged 19-20 who are attending high school may

³³ Gorman, M. (2024). “N.S. government announces plans to index income assistance to inflation rate.” CBC News. [cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/income-assistance-poverty-community-services-brendan-maguire-1.7157211](https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/income-assistance-poverty-community-services-brendan-maguire-1.7157211)

³⁴ Statistics Canada. (2024). “Consumer Price Index: Annual review, 2023.” www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/240116/dq240116b-eng.htm

³⁵ Finance and Treasury Board. (2024). “Analysis of consumer price index for December & annual 2023.” Government of Nova Scotia. novascotia.ca/finance/statistics/topic_news.asp?id=19559&fto=21u&rdval=2024-01

also be eligible.³⁶ This means that individuals with dependents who are those ages, now have to contact their caseworkers to inquire about whether they are eligible—this is how we construct barriers and fences, while wasting the family’s time as well as the caseworker’s time.

In 2025 income assistance was adjusted by 2.5 per cent.³⁷ All-items CPI increased by 2.3% in Nova Scotia and 2.4% nationally in 2024. Food inflation in Nova Scotia in 2024 was 2.7 per cent and rent inflation was seven per cent.³⁸

One time small adjustments to income support rarely result in lifting people out of poverty.

The inflationary adjustment to income assistance is a welcome change, but does little to bridge the significant gap between what families need and the income supports that are available.

³⁶ Government of Nova Scotia. (2025). “Support for School Supplies for Families on Income Assistance.” news.novascotia.ca/en/2025/08/26/support-school-supplies-families-income-assistance

³⁷ Government of Nova Scotia. (2025). “Income Assistance Increases, Indexed to Inflation.” news.novascotia.ca/en/2025/01/02/income-assistance-increases-indexed-inflation

³⁸ Statistics Canada. (2026). *Table 18-10-0005-01 Consumer Price Index, annual average, not seasonally adjusted.* www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/cv.action?pid=1810000501

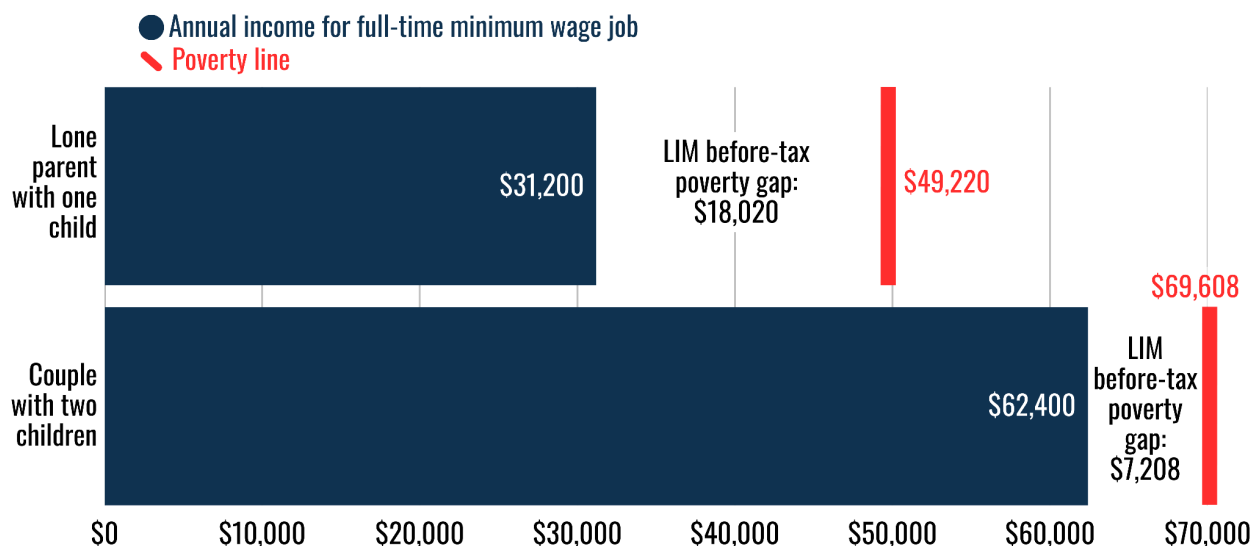
Child Poverty and Parental Employment

Food Banks Canada’s 2025 report on user statistics shows that while social assistance was the primary source of income for 29.3 per cent of food bank users, job income was the primary source of income for 23.7 per cent of users.³⁹

Parents working full-time minimum wage jobs lived below the poverty line in 2023, as shown in Figure 15. Using Nova Scotia’s 2023 minimum wage rate (of \$15), **a lone-parent with one child who works full-time, full year, would be \$18,020 below the poverty line (LIM before-tax). A couple with two children would be \$7,208 below it.**

³⁹ Food Banks Canada. (n.d) “User statistics - NS.” foodbankscanada.ca/hunger-in-canada/hungercount/user-statistics/ns/

Figure 15 / Poverty gap for households working full-time minimum wage jobs
LIM total income (before-tax)



Note The full-time minimum wage annual income is calculated using the \$15/hour minimum wage at 40 hours per week. LIM total income refers to the low-income measure for all income before taxes.

Source Statistics Canada. (2025). Table 11-10-0232-01 Low income measure (LIM) thresholds by income source and household size, Income source: Total income.

Paying Living Wages

7.5 per cent of Nova Scotians aged 18 to 64 are considered to be in “working poverty,” when they live in census families whose earned income is at least \$3,000 but below the CFLIM-AT. This is the third highest provincial rate and higher than the Canadian rate of 6.8 per cent.⁴⁰

In Nova Scotia, **approximately 50 per cent of workers earn less than a living wage,** which is what is needed to cover essentials and securely make ends meet. There are just over 30 per cent earning less than \$20 an hour in 2023.⁴¹ Low-wage workers are

⁴⁰ Campaign 2000. (Forthcoming).

⁴¹ Saulnier, C. and Thompson, K. (2024). *Atlantic Canadians need a raise: One-third of Workers Earn Less than \$20 an hour*. CCPA Nova Scotia Office. policyalternatives.ca/AtlanticLowWageWorkers2024

disproportionately women, and members of racialized communities.

In 2023, the living wage increases averaged 14% largely attributed to increases in rent and food costs, without a significant offset from increased income support.⁴² The 2023 living wage report also explains why ensuring our tax and transfer system needs to be fair and progressive to address inequality. Governments also must carefully consider, and make evidence-based decisions, when setting the income levels for when income benefits phase out and at what rate they are clawed back for every additional dollar earned. For some workers, even slightly higher incomes resulted in clawbacks in government benefits.

Decent Working Conditions and Support

Living wages is a critical foundation of decent work, along with strong labour standards that help guard against exploitation, the need to juggle multiple jobs, and work long hours. Nova Scotia's weak standards leave workers with access to the least paid time off and no job security before 10 years. Parents should be supported to spend quality time with their children including ensuring sufficient paid time off. As outlined in the CCPA-NS' report on labour standards in Nova Scotia, "ensuring decent working conditions goes beyond just considering what minimal protections are in place to stop exploitation. Working conditions are tied to broader social and economic policy as well, including issues such as paid parental and maternity leave, access to affordable (or free) public post-secondary education, access to child care, as some examples."⁴³

⁴² Saulnier, C. (2023). *Living Wages in Nova Scotia 2023 update*.

⁴³ Casey, R. and Saulnier, C. (2025). *The Foundations of Decent Work: An Evaluation of Nova Scotia Labour Standards*. CCPA Nova Scotia Office. policyalternatives.ca/news-research/the-foundations-of-decent-work-an-evaluation-of-nova-scotia-labour-standards/

Recommendations

The social contract has been broken for a long time and has given way to blaming individuals for systemic and policy failures. The social contract was the idea that we redistribute resources through government to enable public-sector solutions that guard against economic or health risks. The lack of strong social protection impedes parents' ability to raise their children in safe, healthy conditions and harms children's rights to the essentials they need to thrive, including housing and food, as well as opportunities to reach their potential. Thousands of children are falling through the holes in our social safety net. We know what solutions are needed and we need a renewed social contract.

The Nova Scotia government must take responsibility for providing insufficient income support to people at higher risk of poverty. Its inadequate support traps people in poverty, resulting in food and housing insecurity, harming their health and well-being, and stymying their future plans. Nova Scotia's Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA) program is supposed to help people avoid struggling to afford the basics, but it does not. In addition to ESIA, families can also access federal benefits (the Canada Child Benefit, the GST credit, and Climate Action Incentive (only as of July 1, 2023, in NS and ended in March 2025)), as well

as other provincial supports (the NS Affordable Living Tax Credit and the NS Child Benefit). However, combining all of these income support programs still leaves many families deep in poverty. If they are fortunate enough to access an affordable apartment and a rental subsidy, they may have easier choices with their monthly budget, but are still not provided the security that comes with a strong safety net.

The same provincial government department responsible for income assistance also oversees the foster care program, and lists failure to provide adequate food, clothing, or shelter as grounds for child neglect under the Child and Family Services Act and for placing children in care. One must then ask why families receiving ESIA do not receive the same level of support provided to foster families, when keeping families together is the stated goal of the Act. Foster families receive bi-weekly block payments providing “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.” The biweekly amounts provided to foster families are \$1,493 for the first child, \$3,060 for a child who needs specialized care, and \$4,264 for a child in medicalized placement. We do not begrudge foster families this support; indeed, we applaud it. However, while the government has made significant reforms to better support foster families, it has stacked the odds against families struggling to make ends meet and take care of their own children.

The recommendations detailed here are specifically directed at the provincial government for families with children. The 2026 Nova Scotia Alternative Budget provides a full roadmap to the root causes that have led to households with and without children struggling to make ends meet.⁴⁴ The federal government plays a critical role in ending child and family poverty as detailed in Campaign 2000’s 2025 Child and Family Poverty in Canada Report Card.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ NSAB Working Group. (2026). *Nova Scotia Alternative Budget 2026: For the Many*. CCPA Nova Scotia Office. policyalternatives.ca/NSAB2026

⁴⁵ Campaign 2000. Forthcoming, Feb 25th, 2026.

Ending child and family poverty in Nova Scotia requires more family income support, transforming systems to ensure dignity, enhancing public services and addressing housing and food insecurity, while protecting against the higher risks of certain children and families.

Develop and fund a **Poverty Elimination Plan for Nova Scotia** and:

- Incorporate **evidence-based targets and timelines to eliminate child poverty by 2031**, outlining outcomes that incorporate the principles of universality, decolonization, social inclusion, anti-racism, decent work and well-being, among others, as outlined in the social policy framework.⁴⁶
- Integrate a **baseline of poverty measures and well-being indicators** from this report card and the *One Chance to be a Child* report,⁴⁷ including food and housing security, learning, physical and mental health, social belonging, and healthy environments.
- Make more **disaggregated quantitative data publicly available** to monitor poverty among those with disproportionately high rates, including by Indigeneity, disability, race, gender, migrant status, 2SLGBTQI+⁴⁸ identity, and age, aligned with Indigenous data collection principles.

⁴⁶ Findlay, T., Saulnier, C., & Stratford, A. (2020). *Are you with us? Covid-19 confirms the need to transform Nova Scotia's social safety net*. CCPA Nova Scotia Office. See also the Social Policy Framework workbook: policyalternatives.ca/publications/facts-infographics/social-policy-framework-nova-scotia

⁴⁷ Department of Pediatrics and Health Populations Institute. (2022). *One Chance to Be a Child: A data profile to inform a better future for child and youth well-being in Nova Scotia*. onechancens.ca/_files/ugd/db246d_4b7d33da61c34333a7bc6d6f3dc546d3.pdf?index=true

⁴⁸ 2SLGBTQI+ represents Two Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, questioning, intersex peoples. Often a "+" symbol follows to include all other sexual orientations, identities and fluidities.

- Develop this plan under the auspices of a **new Child and Youth Advocacy Office**, with support from a diverse stakeholder committee that would lead evaluation and ongoing monitoring.
 - Providing support for ongoing **community conversations** to gather qualitative data must inform this planning and evaluation process.
-

Increase **family income** by:

- **Substantially increasing income assistance rates** is critical to ensure that families who rely on income assistance receive sufficient income benefits to lift them above the CFLIM-AT.
- **Indexing all income support programs, supplements, benefits and credits to a special inflation index based on the Nova Scotia Consumer Price Index for Food and Rental Accommodations.** This measure would better protect these supports against erosion as the cost of living rises.
- **Removing punitive conditions on working** by further reducing earnings clawback for ESIA recipients (up to \$15,750 a year).⁴⁹
- Ensure sufficient income for families with children with disabilities **to cover the additional costs for assistive support** needed to live with dignity.⁵⁰
- Offset increased living costs and unfair tax burden from the sales tax for low-income families by **substantially increasing the Nova Scotia Affordable Living Tax Credit** and equalizing for all persons in the household (\$3217 per person), while expanding eligibility.

⁴⁹ This is the amount of the federal personal exemption, which would mean that ESIA applicants and clients face the same clawback (or exemption before income tax kicks in). Currently, there is no exemption for ESIA applicants, with earnings deducted dollar for dollar. For recipients, the first \$250 is exempt, then 75% applies between \$250-\$500, then 50% between \$500-\$750 and 25% for all other earnings.

⁵⁰ Nova Scotia Government. (2023). *More Disability Funding Support for Families*. news.novascotia.ca/en/2023/02/23/more-disability-funding-support-families

- **Enhance economic protections for pregnancy and early childhood** to support families, a time of special nutritional need coinciding with higher cost and lower incomes. The Nova Scotia government should implement a supplement similar to Newfoundland and Labrador’s Prenatal-Early Childhood Nutrition Supplement (PECNS) to help with the cost of food during this critical developmental window.⁵¹
- Enter into 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* provides a uniform monthly payment of \$500 per child to families with children in temporary care and custody (\$700 for those receiving the Child Disability Benefit). However, some families will still receive less than they would have from the CCB. It is an unnecessary additional program enrollment and transition during a stressful time.
- **Establish conditions to end working poverty** by:
 - **Increasing the Nova Scotia minimum wage to \$20** and continuing to increase it to bridge the gap to the provincial living wage, ensuring it keeps up with the cost of living, taking into consideration rent and food cost inflation, as well as economic growth and average wage growth.
 - **Strengthening labour standards** to support working families' health, safety and work-life balance while enabling easier unionization and collective bargaining.
 - **Strengthening the Pay Equity Act** to include racialized and other equity-deserving groups and extend it to the private sector.

⁵¹ Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. (n.d.). “Prenatal-Early Childhood Nutrition Supplement (PECNS).” gov.nl.ca/sswb/income-support/nutritionssupplement/

Fundamentally transform the child welfare and social assistance systems

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.”⁵² Even those who work within them want to see it changed to one that values the social model of care and better supports families through timely, preventative, transparent and compassionate policy and practice.⁵³

- Both the child welfare and social assistance systems must be reformed to **centre a social model of care, achieving meaningful rights-based, trauma-informed outcomes that include stigma- and discrimination-free, non-punitive support 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 solely because the household lacks the same or similar economic advantages as others in Nova Scotia, thereby removing poverty as a basis for apprehension.

⁵² Wisdom2Action. (2023). *Building an Ecosystem to Realize Children’s Rights and Support Family Well Being in Nova Scotia*. p. 38. nscsw.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Building-an-Ecosystem-for-Children-in-NS.pdf?mc_cid=f0ea832c7a&mc_eid=2c7a472a95

⁵³ Bryan, C., Richardson, B., Ross, N., & Willis, R. (2024). *Contradictions in Care: Labour Conditions, Conflicting Values, and Crisis in Child Protection Social Work in Nova Scotia*. CCPA Nova Scotia Office. policyalternatives.ca/news-research/contradictions-in-care-labour-conditions-conflicting-values-and-crisis-in-child-protection-social-work-in-nova-scotia/

- Automatically enroll youth aging out of care in an income support program available to them until age 27, and prioritize them for supportive housing, employment, and free post-secondary education and training opportunities, and **implement the actions outlined in *The Equitable Standards for Transitions to Adulthood for Youth in Care*.**⁵⁴
-

Realize and protect the family and children's **right to housing and food.**

Food insecurity encompasses a range of experiences, including worrying about running out of food before having the money to buy more, eating food of less-than-ideal quality, cutting meal sizes, skipping meals, and, in the most severe cases, going whole days without food. Addressing food insecurity is urgent to safeguard children's health and fulfil our collective responsibility for their welfare.

Food insecurity is a marker of broader material deprivation; food-insecure children are very likely to be living in compromised housing conditions.

The universal school food program for all elementary grades in Nova Scotia is welcome for supporting learning conditions. A school food program may help families living in poverty reduce their food budget deficit, but it is not a solution to food insecurity. Without robust income security measures, families will struggle to feed their children and themselves at home every day. Food banks and charity food programs are intended as emergency food support and would become obsolete under a plan to eliminate poverty.

Those living in unaffordable housing often compromise their food purchases. Families are experiencing tremendous stress because they are not being served by the for-profit housing market, especially given Nova Scotia's weak tenant protections.

⁵⁴ Doucet, M. & National Council of Youth in Care Advocates. (2021). Equitable Standards for Transitions to Adulthood for Youth in Care. Ottawa, ON: CWLC. ncyica.ca/post/equitable-standards-for-transitions-to-adulthood-for-youth-in-care-public-report-policy-brief

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

- **Providing adequate income support** (as outlined above) is the primary mechanism for addressing food insecurity and should also ensure sufficient income to meet the diverse needs of families with children, including the additional food costs associated with pregnancy and infancy. Women have increased nutritional needs during pregnancy and the postnatal period, making them particularly vulnerable to household food insecurity.
- 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**⁵⁵ to build 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.
- Provide **additional rental subsidies and strengthen tenant protections** and tie rent control to the unit (thus closing both eviction incentives and fixed-term lease problems).

Enhance access to universal public services

- 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.

⁵⁵ See the Housing for all Report for details on the investments needed. Housing for All Working Group. (2021). *Keys to a housing secure future for all Nova Scotians*. CCPA Nova Scotia Office. policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/keys-housing-secure-future-all-nova-scotians

- 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**, 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.
- 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.

With community input, implement responsive, targeted supports to uproot all forms of discrimination, which are root causes of child 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 Nova Scotia government declared intimate partner violence an epidemic with the highest provincial rate in the country.⁵⁶ 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.

Child care also plays a key role in ensuring equitable access to the labour market for women and helps them achieve a healthier work-life balance. There is significant concern that the Nova Scotia government will not be continuing to expand quality, affordable, early learning and child care across the province.⁵⁷ All children should have access to quality early learning opportunities. One study conducted after the introduction of Nova Scotia's universal (no direct cost to parents) Provincial Pre-Primary Program found that the labour market participation rate of mothers with 4-year-old children increased by 21 per cent.⁵⁸

- **Develop and fund proactive strategies in collaboration with communities** that have disproportionately high poverty rates.
- **Support Indigenous self-determination while decolonizing mainstream institutions and policies.** It is troubling that the Nova Scotia government recently withdrew from talks on the ongoing welfare devolution with the Mi'kmaq governance body, developed by the Chiefs and Grand Council, to support individual Mi'kmaq governments in implementing enhanced social programs and services.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Doucette, K. (2024, September). "NS adopts bill declaring domestic violence an epidemic." CBC. [cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/ndp-bill-declares-domestic-violence-epidemic-1.7321627](https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/ndp-bill-declares-domestic-violence-epidemic-1.7321627)

⁵⁷ Thompson, K., Findlay, T., Saulnier, C., & Richard, M. (2025). *The Roadmap is Clear, Detours are Risky: Nova Scotia's Child Care System at a Crossroads*. CCPA Nova Scotia Office. policyalternatives.ca/news-research/the-roadmap-is-clear-detours-are-risky-nova-scotias-child-care-system-at-a-crossroads/

⁵⁸ Thomas, J. (2024). *Free, full-day programming for four-year-old children in Nova Scotia and women's labour market outcomes*. Canadian Journal of Economics/Revue canadienne d'économique. doi.org/10.1111/caje.12704

⁵⁹ Ta'n Etli tpi'tmk. (n.d.). msgam.ca

Conclusion

The release of this report is timely, as the Nova Scotia legislature is set to reconvene next week and a budget is expected to be tabled soon after. This government promised a child poverty reduction strategy when it was elected in 2021. The same party formed a government in November 2024, receiving a supermajority. Such a strategy has yet to be tabled.

This report card makes one thing clear: child poverty in Nova Scotia is policy created, and it is not beyond our control to eradicate it. We know the solutions.

Despite decades of commitments, more than 40,000 children still grow up in households that struggle to meet basic needs. While modest improvements occurred after historic increases, the overall level of poverty remains unacceptably high, deeply unequal across regions and communities, and sharply concentrated among lone-parent, Indigenous, racialized, newcomer, and disability-affected families.

Public policy must be grounded in public evidence. Until transparent, population-level information shows otherwise, the reality facing children is the one documented here.

The evidence already shows that support helps, but it is insufficient. Minimum wages lag behind living wages. Income

assistance leaves families far below basic standards of living. Housing markets continue to push families into food insecurity. Public services are unevenly accessible, and many essentials are increasingly unaffordable.

Child poverty cannot be ended by charity. Ending child poverty is about rights. Children have the right to food, housing, safety, care, and opportunity. Nova Scotia has the fiscal capacity and policy tools to make those rights real. What is required is political will, coordinated planning, and measurable targets.

Thirty-six years after Canada's promise to end child poverty, Nova Scotia still has far to go. The choice ahead is not whether child poverty can be reduced, but whether we are prepared to treat it as the urgent, solvable crisis that it is.

Children cannot wait another generation or even for the next government that promises to act.

Appendix A

Child poverty rates by postal area

Table 5 / Child poverty by postal area

Age 0-17, Nova Scotia, 2023

i=postal city; ii=rural community

Postal Areas 2023	Child poverty rate	Number of low-income children	Change from 2022
Abercombe i	15.8%	30	-21.0%
Addington Forks i	18.2%	40	40.0%
Albert Bridge i	15.4%	40	40.0%
Aberdeen ii	31.4%	160	-15.8%
Amherst i	28.3%	490	-4.7%
Antigonish i	19.4%	240	-16.0%
Arcadia i	27.0%	100	11.6%
Arichat ii	29.4%	50	25.1%
Aylesford ii	19.1%	130	-22.4%
Baddeck ii	26.2%	110	37.9%
Barrington ii	21.2%	70	-23.7%
Barrington Passage ii	30.8%	40	-20.0%
Barss Corner ii	26.7%	40	-6.6%
Barton ii	30.8%	40	-7.5%
Bass River ii	38.5%	50	28.3%
Baxters Harbour ii	32.2%	190	13.8%
Bayhead ii	25.0%	120	-3.8%
Bay View ii	38.8%	310	-5.4%
Beaverbank i	10.2%	170	-4.7%
Bedford i	18.8%	1250	4.4%
Beechville i	12.5%	80	-3.8%
Berwick ii	22.1%	210	-9.4%
Bible Hill i	26.0%	200	-6.5%
Blockhouse ii	23.1%	60	44.4%
Boutilliers Point i	20.0%	30	-13.4%
Boylston ii	25.0%	30	N/A
Bridgetown ii	36.2%	170	2.3%
Bridgewater i	24.1%	350	No change

Postal Areas 2023	Child poverty rate	Number of low-income children	Change from 2022
Broad Cove (formerly East Point Medway) ii	29.4%	50	17.6%
Brooklyn Corner i	25.0%	50	5.0%
Brooklyn i	23.1%	30	-25.0%
Brooklyn ii	27.8%	50	18.3%
Brookside i	9.1%	40	28.2%
Caledonia ii	33.3%	60	No change
Cambridge ii	18.2%	80	No change
Canso ii	33.3%	60	No change
Central Onslow i	42.9%	30	No change
Centreville ii	23.1%	120	20.3%
Chester Basin ii	18.4%	70	-20.3%
Cheticamp ii	18.5%	50	No change
Church Point ii	25.0%	50	-21.4%
Clarks Harbour ii	33.3%	110	6.1%
Clementsvalle ii	50.0%	40	12.6%
Clydesdale i	15.0%	30	10.3%
Coldbrook i	11.1%	60	1.8%
Cole Harbour i	12.9%	40	-15.1%
Cornwallis Park ii	44.4%	40	33.3%
Cow Bay i	19.0%	40	-16.3%
Cross Roads Country Harbour ii	42.9%	30	N/A
Dartmouth i	19.0%	3190	-9.5%
D'Escousse ii	27.3%	30	N/A
Digby ii	38.8%	310	N/A
Dingwall ii	16.7%	30	N/A
Dominion i	34.5%	100	3.6%
Donkin i	50.0%	40	50.2%
East Amherst i	17.1%	60	-6.0%
East Chester ii	23.7%	90	-9.9%
East Margaretsville ii	28.6%	20	-33.3%
East Preston i	28.6%	60	-30.1%
Eastern Passage i	14.2%	320	-7.8%
Ellershouse ii	21.2%	70	No change
Elmsdale i	12.5%	70	8.7%
Enfield i	9.5%	100	-9.5%
Eureka ii	22.2%	40	-20.1%
Evanston ii	36.4%	40	21.3%

Postal Areas 2023	Child poverty rate	Number of low-income children	Change from 2022
Fall River i	6.7%	120	9.8%
Falmouth i	21.0%	250	-7.5%
First South/Lunenburg ii	23.0%	170	16.8%
Florence i	32.0%	80	-18.2%
Forest Hill i	25.0%	60	8.2%
Gardiner Mines i	25.0%	20	-33.3%
Glace Bay i	35.2%	860	-1.4%
Goshen ii	60.0%	30	N/A
Granville Ferry i	33.9%	200	9.4%
Great Village ii	16.7%	30	N/A
Greenfield ii	20.0%	20	-33.3%
Greenwich i	18.2%	40	-4.2%
Greenwood ii	12.2%	60	-9.6%
Gulf Shore ii	38.1%	80	No change
Guyborough ii	31.6%	60	13.7%
Hacketts Cove i	28.6%	20	-42.8%
Halifax i	26.7%	6670	-7.6%
Hammonds Plains i	8.5%	240	-1.2%
Harrietsfield i	20.0%	30	6.4%
Hatchet Lake i	17.9%	50	7.2%
Havre Boucher ii	17.4%	40	8.7%
Head of Jeddore ii	15.8%	30	No change
Heatheron ii	15.4%	20	-33.3%
Hebville i	21.4%	30	No change
Hebron i	15.4%	20	-46.2%
Hilden ii	21.6%	160	-12.6%
Hopewell ii	33.3%	60	26.6%
Herring Cove i	11.4%	40	-33.3%
Hortonville i	30.8%	40	N/A
Howie Centre i	23.1%	30	7.9%
Hubley i	11.3%	60	-5.8%
Inverness ii	24.3%	90	21.5%
Italy Cross	25.0%	30	-24.9%
Kelleys Cove i	60.0%	30	N/A
Kennetcook i	0.0%		N/A
Kennetcook ii	26.4%	140	N/A
Kentville i	23.6%	450	-10.9%
Kingston ii	21.2%	430	-10.5%

Postal Areas 2023	Child poverty rate	Number of low-income children	Change from 2022
Lake Echo i	14.5%	80	-2.0%
Lake Loon i	23.1%	30	No change
Lakeside i	28.6%	60	31.8%
Lantz i	12.2%	60	-14.7%
Lawrencetown i (Halifax County)	11.1%	60	19.4%
Lawrencetown ii (Annapolis County)	36.7%	110	6.4%
Liverpool ii	39.7%	230	21.0%
Linacy i	20.7%	60	17.6%
Lockeport ii	17.6%	30	No change
Louisbourg i	25.0%	30	-16.7%
Louisdale ii	22.2%	40	-20.1%
Lower Sackville i	20.0%	830	2.0%
Lower South River i	15.6%	50	-14.3%
Lower Woods Harbour ii	25.0%	40	-6.4%
Lyons Brook ii	28.2%	290	9.7%
Lucasville i	14.0%	60	14.8%
Mabou ii	14.3%	30	N/A
Maccan ii	37.5%	30	No change
Mahone Bay ii	28.6%	160	-1.7%
Malagash Centre ii	50.0%	30	N/A
McLellans Brook i	17.6%	30	-40.1%
McPhersons Mills i	37.5%	30	No change
Meaghers Grant i	22.2%	20	-33.3%
Merigomish ii	20.8%	50	-16.8%
Meteghan ii	33.3%	60	13.3%
Meteghan River ii	20.0%	30	No change
Middle Musquodoboit ii	22.7%	50	-25.3%
Middle Sackville i	10.5%	360	-3.7%
Milford ii	15.9%	70	-22.4%
Mill Cove ii	20.0%	150	5.8%
Milton ii	35.3%	60	-9.3%
Monastery ii	31.3%	50	9.4%
Moser River ii	37.5%	30	-25.0%
Mount Uniacke ii	14.9%	140	-17.7%
Mulgrave ii	33.3%	40	8.1%
Musquodoboit Harbour ii	17.5%	270	-7.4%
New Germany ii	32.6%	140	-4.4%
New Glasgow i	26.9%	500	-1.5%

Postal Areas 2023	Child poverty rate	Number of low-income children	Change from 2022
New Minas i	28.4%	210	-1.4%
New Ross ii	33.3%	70	-18.6%
New Victoria i	40.0%	40	33.3%
New Waterford i	36.6%	370	-8.0%
Nictaux ii	34.9%	290	6.1%
Nine Mile River i	10.5%	20	-30.0%
North Alton i	19.2%	50	-25.9%
North Preston i	54.5%	120	-18.3%
North River i	14.3%	30	-24.7%
North Sydney i	31.1%	280	-6.6%
Onslow Mountain i	21.1%	40	No change
Oxford ii	26.1%	120	-8.7%
Pleasantville ii	30.0%	60	20.0%
Plympton ii	33.3%	20	-44.5%
Plymouth i	25.0%	40	-6.4%
Pomquet i	11.5%	30	7.5%
Port Greville ii	31.4%	110	-15.4%
Port Hawkesbury i	23.2%	130	-25.2%
Port Hood ii	14.3%	30	N/A
Port Howe ii	42.9%	30	14.4%
Port Williams ii	19.5%	80	-8.9%
Porters Lake i	6.9%	50	-2.8%
Reserve Mines i	32.1%	90	8.4%
River Herbert ii	28.6%	40	No change
River John ii	31.6%	60	N/A
Riverton ii	23.3%	200	-6.8%
Salmon River i	22.2%	100	-13.3%
Salmon River. ii	42.9%	30	N/A
Salt Springs ii	21.4%	30	N/A
Sandy Point ii	32.5%	250	2.8%
Saulnierville ii	28.6%	40	43.0%
Scotch Village/Newport ii	23.1%	180	-8.7%
Scotsburn ii	14.8%	40	-30.8%
Scotchtown i	33.3%	40	-13.5%
Shag Harbour ii	21.4%	30	-7.4%
Sheet Harbour ii	41.7%	100	19.8%
Sherbrooke ii	27.3%	30	N/A
Southampton ii	40.0%	40	No change

Postal Areas 2023	Child poverty rate	Number of low-income children	Change from 2022
South Ohio i	21.4%	30	No change
Still Water Lake i	5.8%	30	N/A
Springfield ii	44.4%	40	No change
Springhill ii	36.2%	250	-10.2%
St Andrews ii	12.5%	30	N/A
St Bernard ii	40.4%	210	-6.3%
Stewiacke ii	23.2%	160	3.6%
Sydney i	27.4%	1540	1.1%
Sydney Mines i	35.8%	380	No change
Tangier ii	33.3%	40	33.2%
Tantallon i	17.6%	30	N/A
Terence Bay i	27.3%	30	N/A
Tidnish Bridge i	36.4%	40	21.3%
Thorburn ii	23.8%	50	-4.8%
Three Mile Plains ii	27.2%	410	-11.4%
Timberlea i	10.5%	200	-12.5%
Trenton i	26.3%	200	-3.7%
Truro Heights i	33.3%	100	20.7%
Truro i	29.0%	650	-9.7%
Tusket ii	22.9%	110	-6.5%
Upper Musquodoboit ii	30.0%	30	No change
Upper Rawdon ii	27.8%	50	-5.4%
Upper Sackville i	12.5%	30	-25.1%
Upper Stewiacke ii	35.3%	60	-5.9%
Upper Tantallon i	4.3%	40	No change
Valley i	9.5%	70	3.3%
Wallbrook i	0.0%		N/A
Walton ii	40.0%	60	20.1%
Waterville ii	26.1%	120	4.4%
Waverley i	7.0%	30	-39.7%
Wedgeport ii	33.3%	30	N/A
Wellington i B97703	9.4%	30	No change
Wellington. i B90122	50.0%	30	N/A
West Arichat ii	37.5%	30	N/A
West Lochabar i	16.7%	30	5.7%
Western Shore ii	30.8%	40	No change
Westphal i	15.0%	30	10.3%
Westville ii	24.6%	290	-3.9%

Postal Areas 2023	Child poverty rate	Number of low-income children	Change from 2022
Whites Lake i	10.3%	30	-3.7%
Wileville i	30.8%	40	23.2%
Williamswood i	12.1%	40	-17.7%
Wilmot ii	24.2%	80	-17.7%
Windsor Junction i	6.3%	20	-33.0%
Wolfville i	17.6%	90	-24.8%

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

Source Prepared using Statistics Canada, (T1 Family Files, 2023).

Appendix B

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

Table 6 / Child poverty by postal area, Halifax Regional Municipality Urban Core and Sydney Forward Sortation Areas (FSA), 2023

Region	Postal area	Child poverty rate	Number of low-income children	Change from 2022
Bounded by Lake Charles/Micmac/Topsail	B2X	20.0%	450	-8.0%
Downtown Dartmouth south to Woodside	B2Y	20.2%	460	-21.8%
North Dartmouth/Harbourview/Highfield park/Albro Lake/Crichton Park	B3A	28.9%	1020	-12.1%
Burnside	B3B	25.0%	80	-14.4%
South End Peninsula	B3H	20.2%	390	-12.4%
Downtown Halifax	B3J	32.6%	140	-25.8%
North End Peninsula	B3K	33.3%	970	-4.8%
West End Peninsula	B3L	25.6%	750	1.6%
Bedford Basin	B3M	27.3%	2010	-13.9%
Fairview & south to Rotary	B3N	22.0%	520	1.8%
Armdale/Purcells Cove	B3P	18.4%	440	-8.7%
Spryfield	B3R	37.6%	850	-11.4%
Bayers Lake	B3S	25.6%	530	-3.9%
Bedford	B4A	17.9%	700	2.8%
Bedford	B4B	19.9%	540	3.5%
Sydney (Southwest)	B1L	14.0%	60	-2.1%
Sydney (East)	B1M	16.7%	20	-19.8%
Sydney (North)	B1N	42.1%	400	1.4%
Sydney (North Central)	B1P	31.2%	720	2.2%
Sydney (West)	B1R	18.6%	130	12.9%
Sydney (Central)	B1S	18.7%	200	-5.9%

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. Neighbourhood place names are assigned to postal codes using prior research or Google Maps data.

Source Prepared using Statistics Canada, (T1 Family Files, 2023).

Appendix C

Child poverty rates by federal electoral district

Table 7 / Child poverty by federal electoral district
Rate, number, in 2023

Electoral District	Child poverty rate	Number of low-income children
Acadia-Annapolis	28.8%	3930
Cape Breton-Canso-Antigonish	26.2%	3610
Central Nova	21.3%	2880
Cumberland-Colchester	25.5%	3790
Dartmouth-Cole Harbour	17.9%	3560
Halifax	24.5%	3460
Halifax West	21.2%	4370
Kings-Hants	21.5%	3940
Sackville-Bedford-Preston	15.6%	3340
South Shore-St. Margarets	24.0%	3090
Sydney-Glace Bay	30.6%	4260

Source Statistics Canada, Income Statistics Division, T1 Family File, 2023.

Appendix D

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

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. The development of small-area family data is based on the **census family** concept. The census family concept groups individuals into census families (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.⁶⁰ The T1FF is closer to the Census in that it captures data from most families, though this data does not include racialized, immigration, or Aboriginal status.

The **Canadian Income Survey (CIS)**⁶¹ 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 55,000 households.

⁶⁰ Government of Canada. (2025). *Annual Income Estimates for Census Families and Individuals (T1 Family File)*.

www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvey&SDDS=4105

⁶¹ Government of Canada. (2025). *Canadian Income Survey (CIS)*.

www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvey&SDDS=5200

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.

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.⁶² The basket is costed in 50 regions across Canada making it sensitive to regional differences. This report uses the 2018 MBM base⁶³ 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.

⁶² Government of Canada. (2020). *Report on the second comprehensive review of the Market Basket Measure*. www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/catalogue/75F0002M2020002

⁶³ The 2023 MBM rebase was published in November 2025, but is not used for this report, as the data was procured from Statistics Canada prior to this date. The 2023 MBM rebase can be accessed here: www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1110006601

Low-income thresholds

Table 8 / 2023 thresholds for after-tax census family low income measure

Number of family members	Low income measure threshold
1	\$26,442
2	\$37,395
3	\$45,799
4	\$52,884
5	\$59,126
6	\$64,769
7	\$69,959
8	\$74,789
9	\$79,326
10	\$83,617

Note The CFLIM-AT for any census family size can be calculated by multiplying \$26,442 by the square root of the family size. For example, the after-tax CFLIM for a family of 4 is \$52,884. This is calculated by multiplying \$26,442 by 2 (square root of 4).

Source T1 Family File, Final Estimates, 2023. Statistics Canada – Catalogue no. 72-212-X.

**Table 9 / Market Basket Measure thresholds, Nova Scotia
2023 constant dollars, 2018 base year**

Number of Family Members	Nova Scotia		Nova Scotia		Halifax, Nova Scotia	Cape Breton, Nova Scotia
	Nova Scotia rural	population under 30,000	30,000 to 99,999	population		
1	\$24,538	\$25,050	\$24,688	\$26,482	\$24,656	
2	\$34,701	\$35,426	\$34,913	\$37,451	\$34,868	
3	\$42,500	\$43,388	\$42,760	\$45,868	\$42,705	
4	\$49,075	\$50,100	\$49,375	\$52,964	\$49,311	
5	\$54,868	\$56,014	\$55,203	\$59,216	\$55,131	
6	\$60,104	\$61,360	\$60,472	\$64,867	\$60,393	

Source Technical Reference Guide for the Annual Income Estimates for Census Families, Individuals and Seniors. T1 Family File, Final Estimates, 2023. Statistics Canada – Catalogue no. 72-212-X 9* The CFLIM-AF for any census family size can be calculated by multiplying

Key Terms and Definitions⁶⁴

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).

⁶⁴ Unless otherwise indicated, definitions for these key terms are from Statistics Canada, www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/230502/dq230502a-eng.htm

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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We also acknowledge that the CCPA-NS office is located in K'ijipuktuk in Mi'kma'ki, the unceded, unsurrendered 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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