

## Backgrounder

### BC Child Poverty Report Card

November 24, 2021

## Key Findings

- This is First Call's 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Child Poverty Report.
- In 2019, the year this report covers, there were 156,560 (18.0%) children and youth living in poor households with many living in deep poverty.
- At 18.0%, BC had a slightly higher child poverty rate than Canada at 17.7%. This is down slightly from 2018 at 18.5% following the trend of gradual improvement since 2010.
- Families with children in the highest income decile collected twenty-four times more than families in the lowest income decile. This was a larger disparity than the Canadian average ratio of twenty.
- The disparity for lone-parent families in BC was worse with the average income for the top 10% of lone-parent families at 54 times the average income for lone-parent families in the lowest decile. This was the highest income inequality ratio for lone-parent families of all provinces and territories.
- The poverty rate for BC children in lone-parent families overall was 49% and 55% of BC's poor children in 2019 lived in lone-parent families.
- Many BC families had annual incomes that were \$12,000 to \$14,000 below the poverty line.
- The child poverty rate on sixty-four BC First Nations reserves in 2019 was 40.9% with a higher rate on rural reserves (47.3%) than on urban reserves (35.4%).
- Many of the regional districts with the highest child poverty rates were located in coastal areas, particularly along the north and central coastal areas.
- Thanks to government income transfers, 93,780 BC children were kept out of poverty in 2019.

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

## Key Recommendations to Governments

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

- Make sure all workers in BC are covered by the hourly minimum wage by the end of 2021 and establish a permanent Fair Wages Commission.
- Amend the BC Employment Standards Act to provide all workers, regardless of their employment status (full time, part time, casual) or length of service, with the right to paid sick leave.

- Adjust income and disability assistance rates for families with a child with disabilities to recognize the additional costs associated with raising a child with extra support needs.
- Expand the post-secondary program options eligible for support under the Single Parent Employment Initiative and allow all those on social assistance to retain benefits while attending a post-secondary institution.
- Index the BC Child Opportunity Benefit to inflation to ensure the value of the benefit does not erode over time.
- Increase program funding and support for families raising children with disabilities and complex medical needs.
- Increase investment in public health initiatives aimed to support maternal health and healthy infant development, as well as non-barriered, free, community-based programs and services for all families with young children.
- Automatically enroll all young people transitioning out of care in an income support program that meets their basic living costs and ensures they have safe housing.
- Tie rent control to the unit to remove the incentive for evictions of current tenants to raise the rent for new tenants.
- Ensure K-12 public education funding is sufficient to mitigate inequities between high- and low-income neighbourhoods, school districts and families and to ensure appropriate inclusion of students with diverse learning needs.
- Collaborate with First Nations, Métis and Inuit governments and Indigenous organizations to develop and implement plans to prevent, reduce and eradicate child and family poverty in Indigenous communities.
- Continue to prioritize new child care investments in 2022 budgets and beyond to establish universal access to a system of high-quality, inclusive child care for BC children and families that has no parent fee for families with annual incomes under \$45,000 and creates enough licensed child care spaces for all who choose them.
- Governments at all levels should ensure their direct and contract employees are paid a living wage.
- Scale up funding to build thousands of new social and affordable rental housing units and maintain existing affordable housing stock including designating additional housing, created by BC Housing, for youth leaving care.

## About Us

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

The 2019 BC Child Poverty Report Card, maps and other materials are posted here: <https://still1in5.ca/>

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