



Overview: The State of Poverty

A Brief Summary of Existing and Proposed Policy, Data, and Reporting

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This overview is intended to be a brief, non-exhaustive, semi-chronological guide to existing and planned data and policy on addressing poverty, at a federal level, at a provincial level within British Columbia, and at a regional level within the Central Okanagan.

Federal Resources			
Title	Release	Type	Link
Opportunity for All: Poverty Reduction Strategy (Government of Canada)	Aug 2018	Strategy / Report	LINK
Report on the Second Comprehensive Review of the Market Basket Measure (Statistics Canada)	Feb 2020	Report	LINK
Canadian Income Survey 2019 (Statistics Canada)	Mar 2021	Data & Report	LINK (Data) LINK (Report)
Housing Market Information Portal (CMHC)	Ongoing	Data	LINK
Budget 2021 (Government of Canada)	Apr 2021	Budget Report	LINK
Dimensions of Poverty Hub (Statistics Canada)	Ongoing	Data	LINK

BC Resources			
Title	Release	Type	Link
Poverty Reduction Strategy Act (Government of British Columbia)	Nov 2018	Law	LINK
TogetherBC (Government of British Columbia)	Mar 2019	Strategy / Report	LINK
TogetherBC 2019 Annual Report (Government of British Columbia)	Dec 2020	Report	LINK
Budget 2021 (Government of British Columbia)	Apr 2021	Budget Report	LINK
TogetherBC 2020 Annual Report (Government of British Columbia)	<i>Forthcoming¹</i>	Report	<i>Forthcoming</i>

Central Okanagan Resources			
Title	Release	Type	Link
Census 2016 – Kelowna CMA – Income (Statistics Canada)	2017	Data	LINK
Central Okanagan Community Wellness Analysis (United Way – Southern Interior BC)	Feb 2020	Report	LINK
Central Okanagan Poverty and Wellness Strategy (United Way – Southern Interior BC)	<i>Forthcoming²</i>	Strategy / Report	LINK

¹ Expect October 2021 per [TogetherBC 2019 Annual Report](#)

² Expected November 2021 per [Kelowna Capital News \(April 10, 2021\)](#)

Available Community Data:

- **Census 2016 (Release: 2017)**

Statistics Canada allows users to sort products available through [Census 2016](#) by various levels of geography. This includes detailed breakdowns of demographics, but also the Income variable.

- **Housing Market Information Portal (Ongoing)**

CMHC's [Housing Market Information Portal](#) offers free, easy-to-use access to the latest housing market data for Canada (from Starts, to Core Housing breakdowns, to Ownership levels), from the National level, to the provincial level, to CMA data, down to Census Tract geographies.

- **Dimensions of Poverty Hub (Ongoing)**

Statistic's Canada's [Dimensions of Poverty Hub](#) tracks data related to "Opportunity for All", the federal poverty reduction strategy.

Official Federal Poverty Line & Federal Poverty Strategy

Employment and Social Development Canada offers detailed background information on the [Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy](#), first launched in August 2018. In addition to setting an Official Poverty Line to measure progress, it sets out targets of:

- a 20% reduction in poverty by 2020
- a 50% reduction in poverty by 2030

This Official Poverty Line would be the Market Based Measure.³ The [Strategy](#) details how this line would vary from region to region.

In 2020, Statistics Canada released their [fourth and final report](#) on the re-based Market Based Measure to 2018 levels. When the results of the [2019 Canada Income Survey](#) were released in March 2021, the [associated Statistics Canada data tables](#) offered the first opportunity to compare British Columbia's progress in light of the updates to the measure, described in greater detail below.

Poverty Reduction in BC

The BC's provincial [Poverty Reduction Act](#) passed in the same year (2018), with mandates that:

- The minister must develop a strategy to reduce and prevent poverty in British Columbia.
- The strategy must include initiatives intended, over the 5-year period beginning on January 1, 2019, to reduce the poverty rate for 2024 below the poverty rate for 2016 by at least
 - (a) 25% among all persons, and
 - (b) 50% among persons under 18 years of age.

³ For an external critique of the MBM line, see the Fraser Institute's "[Critical Assessment of Canada's Official Poverty Line](#)" (Sarlo, 2020)

- Progress: Government will prepare annual progress reports by October 1 each year

The [TogetherBC Poverty Reduction Strategy](#) detailed the province’s plan. The [Annual Report for 2019](#) highlighted evidence of progress (including a significant decrease in the incidence of poverty in other provinces as well):

“Between 2016 and 2018 (the most recent data available), the overall poverty rate in British Columbia decreased from 12 per cent to 8.9 per cent, a 25.8 per cent reduction. The child poverty rate decreased from 12 per cent to 6.9 per cent, a 42.5 per cent reduction. This is an overall reduction of 136,000 British Columbians living in poverty since 2016, including 42,000 children.” (Page 15)

Table 1. Incidence of Low Income by Economic Family - MBM (2008 Base)³

All Persons	Incidence (%)				Ranking (Higher Number is Better)		
	2016	2017	2018	% Change 2016-2018	2016	2017	2018
Canada	10.6	9.5	8.7	-17.9%
BC	12.0	10.3	8.9	-25.8%	2	2	6
NL	10.8	9.7	9.7	-10.2%	6	5	2
PEI	11.3	10.1	9.1	-19.5%	5	4	5
NS	12.9	12.8	10.3	-20.2%	1	1	1
NB	11.8	9.7	7.9	-33.1%	3	5	8
QC	8.6	9.0	7.9	-8.1%	9	8	8
ON	11.8	10.2	9.5	-19.5%	3	3	3
MB	9.4	8.7	9.3	-1.1%	7	9	4
SK	9.2	9.5	8.8	-4.3%	8	7	7
AB	8.6	6.8	7.3	-15.1%	9	10	10

However, the report also noted some limitations:

“It is important to note that the MBM does not reflect the circumstances of poverty for Indigenous communities. Government is committed to working with the First Nations Leadership Council, and Indigenous organizations, to develop meaningful measures for Indigenous communities over the next year.” (Page 15)

Likewise, this was a period of review for the Market Based Measure, resulting in the 2019 Annual Report utilizing the 2008 MBM base while the still-forthcoming 2020 Annual Report would use the updated 2018 figures.

As was noted, Statistics Canada data tables also allowed for some preliminary comparisons. The resulting increase to the MBM line was strongest in BC.

Percentage and number of persons in poverty, 2018								
Geography	Percentage of persons in poverty					Number of persons in poverty		
	2008-base	2018-base	2008-base	2018-base	Difference	2008-base	2018-base	Difference
	%	%	Order (High-Low)	Order	%	Persons (x1000)	Persons (x1000)	Persons (x1000)
Nova Scotia	10.3	13.3	1	1	3	96	124	28
NL and Labrador	9.7	11.2	2	5	1.5	50	58	8
Ontario	9.5	11.6	3	4	2.1	1,351	1,658	307
Manitoba	9.3	10.9	4	7	1.6	117	137	20
PEI	9.1	11.9	5	3	2.8	14	18	4
British Columbia	8.9	12.1	6	2	3.2	421	577	156
Saskatchewan	8.8	11.2	7	6	2.4	96	122	26
New Brunswick	7.9	10	8	8	2.1	58	74	16
Quebec	7.9	9.7	8	9	1.8	655	812	157
Alberta	7.3	9.4	10	10	2.1	316	403	87
Canada	8.7	11			2.3	3,173	3,983	810

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/cv.action?pid=1110013501>

However, the 2019 data demonstrates a far more worrying shift, with both Saskatchewan and Manitoba experiencing year over year increases in the percentage of the population falling below the MBM poverty line.

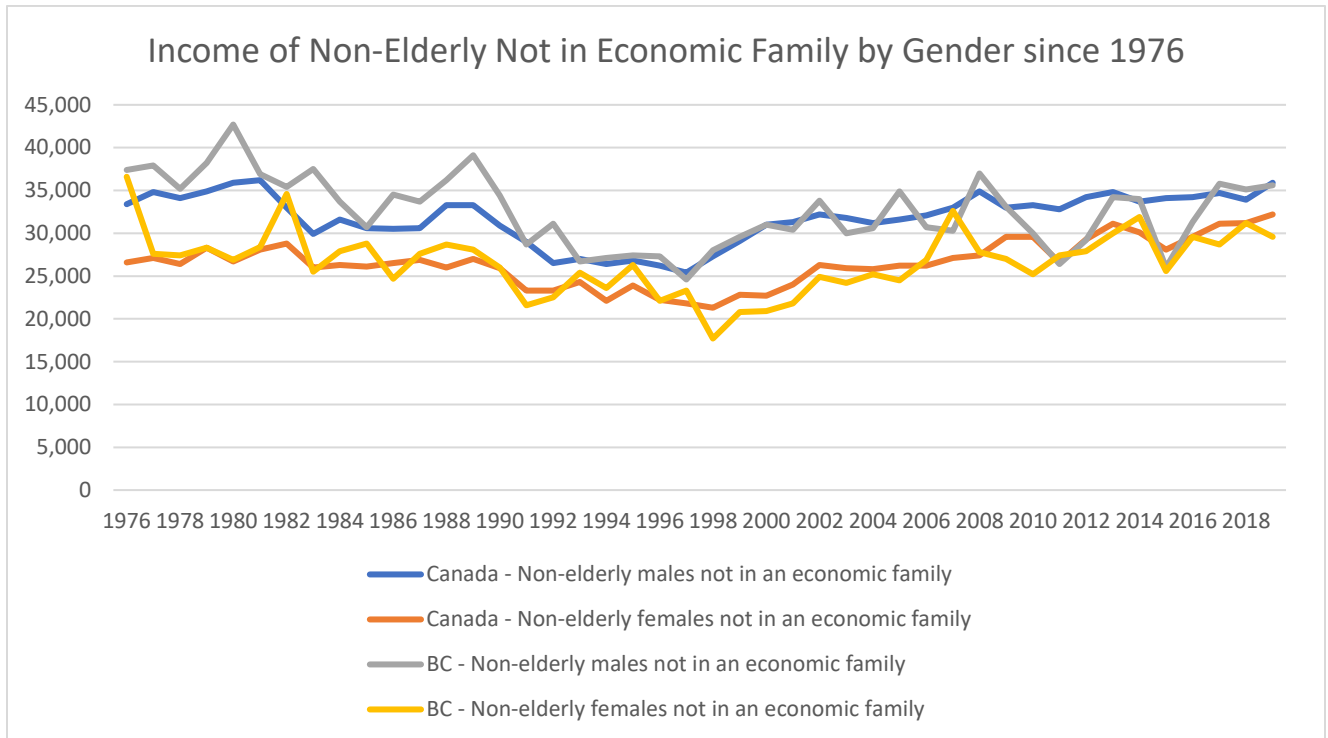
Market basket measure, 2018 base									
Geography	Percentage of persons in low income								
	2016	Rank	2017	Rank	2018	Rank	2019	Rank	% 2018-2019
Saskatchewan	11.5	8	12.2	5	11.2	5	12.4	1	11%
Nova Scotia	16.2	1	15	1	13.3	1	12.1	2	-9%
Manitoba	12.3	6	11	8	10.9	7	11.4	3	5%
PEI	11.8	7	13.3	3	11.9	3	10.9	4	-8%
Ontario	13.6	3	12.2	4	11.6	4	10.9	5	-6%
British Columbia	15.3	2	13.6	2	12.1	2	10.8	6	-11%
NL and Labrador	12.4	5	11.4	7	11.2	6	10.7	7	-4%
New Brunswick	13.6	4	12.1	6	10	8	9.4	8	-6%
Quebec	10.9	9	10.8	9	9.7	9	8.7	9	-10%
Alberta	10.8	10	9	10	9.4	10	8.2	10	-13%

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/cv.action?pid=1110013501>

In general, the low-income rate has been particularly high for those not in an academic family. This was particularly true of non-elderly individuals. The rate for non-elderly females not in an economic family rose to 43% in 2019, while the rate for elderly individuals not in an economic family continued to see large declines (see below table).

Percentage of persons in low income (British Columbia, Market-based measure, 2018 base)			
Persons in low income	2018	2019	Change
All persons	12.1	10.8	-1.3
Persons under 18 years	10.9	7.2	-3.7
Persons 18 to 64 years	13.8	13.3	-0.5
Persons 65 years and over	7.7	5.9	-1.8
Males, under 18 years	12.3	6.9	-5.4
Males, 18 to 64 years	14	12.4	-1.6
Males, 65 years and over	7.2	5.1	-2.1
Females, under 18 years	9.3	7.4	-1.9
Females, 18 to 64 years	13.6	14.2	0.6
Females, 65 years and over	8.3	6.7	-1.6
Persons in economic families	7.9	6.6	-1.3
Males in economic families	8.2	6.6	-1.6
Females in economic families	7.5	6.7	-0.8
Elderly persons in economic families	3.5	3.1	-0.4
Elderly males in economic families	3.3	3.3	0
Elderly females in economic families	3.7	2.9	-0.8
Persons under 18 years in economic families	10.8	7	-3.8
Persons under 18 years in couple families with children	9.2	5	-4.2
Persons under 18 years in female lone-parent families	30.7	27.7	-3
Persons 18 to 64 years in economic families	8	7.5	-0.5
Males 18 to 64 years in economic families	8.1	7.4	-0.7
Females 18 to 64 years in economic families	8	7.5	-0.5
Persons not in an economic family	32.5	30.6	-1.9
Males not in an economic family	32.4	27.3	-5.1
Females not in an economic family	32.5	33.7	1.2
Elderly persons not in an economic family	19.7	13.6	-6.1
Elderly males not in an economic family	21.5	11.4	-10.1
Elderly females not in an economic family	18.6	15.1	-3.5
Non-elderly persons not in an economic family	37.4	37.4	0
Non-elderly males not in an economic family	35.5	32.2	-3.3
Non-elderly females not in an economic family	39.7	43	3.3
https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/cv.action?pid=1110013501			

Female subsets of several demographic groups saw increases, but year-over-year change should be considered in the context of broader trends. For example, while variable, gender disparities in non-elderly median after-tax income have not had visibly sustained growth either provincially or federally.



<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1110019001>

Government Budgets

Both federal and provincial budgets identified a number of proposals related to employment, income supports, housing, homelessness, and related topics.

- Federal Budget 2021: [“A Recovery Plan for Jobs, Growth, and Resilience”](#)
- Provincial Budget 2021: [“A Stronger BC for Everyone”](#)

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives maintains a list of its own analysis on the federal budget, but also organizational responses such as the Assembly of First Nations, the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, Colour of Poverty – Colour of Change, the Council of Canadians with Disabilities, Oxfam Canada, the Women’s National Housing & Homelessness Network, and many others:

- [CCPA 2021 Federal Budget Analysis](#)

This is in addition to investments at the municipal level related to poverty and social development (see, e.g. [Kelowna Council Priorities 2019-2022](#)).

Basic Income Panel & Associated Works on Poverty (2021)

In parallel to this work, BC appointed an expert panel to explore the idea of a basic income guarantee in British Columbia.

- **Final Report of the BC Expert Panel on Basic Income** https://bcbasicincomepanel.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Final_Report_BC_Basic_Income_Panel.pdf

Their work concluded in December 2020. While the panel recommended against implementing a basic income or conducting a basic income pilot, the report offers 65 recommendations to improve B.C.'s social safety net (starting p.507 of the report, also listed in the [Executive Summary](#)). Categories of recommendations include:

- Reform Disability Assistance into a targeted basic income
- Reform Temporary Assistance to reduce the “welfare wall”
- Provide extended health-care benefits to all low-income individuals
- Provide housing support to all low-income renters
- Provide intensive work support to targeted groups
- Enhance support for low-income families with children
- Enhance financial and support services for young adults
- Enhance financial and support services for people fleeing violence
- Improve precarious employment through labour regulation reform
- Improve the way benefit delivery platforms function
- Make ongoing engagement a permanent part of all policies

The researchers' mandate was to study basic income as a potential policy tool for poverty reduction, assessing its feasibility and its relation to existing income and social supports in BC. A series of independent research papers were posted in support of this work, including four articles categorized as being focused on Poverty in BC:

- [A Note on Single Adult Poverty in British Columbia](#) - David Green (University of British Columbia)
- [Defining and Describing Energy Poverty in British Columbia: The Distribution of Households' Energy Expenditure](#) - Blake Shaffer & Jennifer Winter (University of Calgary)
- [Homelessness and Poverty in British Columbia](#) - Ron Kneebone (University of Calgary)
- [Poverty in British Columbia: Income Thresholds, Trends, Rates, and Depths of Poverty](#) - Gillian Petit & Lindsay M. Tedds (University of Calgary)

Other works treat related topics of Basic Income Design, Children, Finance, Gender, Housing, Labour, Programs / System, Reform, and Tax. In particular, note that in the process of collecting data, Lindsay Tedds and Gillian Petit collected comprehensive details on Income and Social Support Programs in B.C. These data were then organized into publicly accessibly [Sunburst Charts](#).

Central Okanagan Community Wellness Analysis (2020)

In the context of the BC Poverty Reduction Strategy, and in preparation for a regionally focused wellness strategy, the [United Way – Southern Interior BC](#) had led a series of engagements to better understand – and ameliorate – the state of poverty within our community. With support from the Vancouver Foundation, United Way SIBC, the City of Kelowna and the District of Lake Country, and the Central

Okanagan Poverty Reduction Committee partnered with Urban Matters CCC to develop the [Central Okanagan Community Wellness Analysis](#) (January 2020).

Guided by data integrated from [Statistics Canada Census Data](#), [BC Stats](#), the [Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission](#), and the [Canadian Rental Housing Index](#), the Community Wellness Analysis is intended to build “an evidence base as a foundation to the development of a regional Wellness Strategy” (p.1). The listed objectives include:

- Provide an overall context to various interrelated systems, including housing, income, employment, food security, transportation, and access to education;
- Define affordability and other terms common within the community wellness and poverty reduction sphere;
- Provide as much comprehensive data as possible regarding the state of poverty in the Central Okanagan – including within Peachland, West Kelowna, Westbank First Nation, Kelowna, Lake Country, Okanagan Indian Band, and Regional District of the Central Okanagan. As much as possible, the analysis will include trends and characteristics of wellness unique to each community;
- Tease out factors contributing to poverty (root causes); and
- Prioritise areas for evidence-based action.

Upcoming Developments

TogetherBC 2020 Annual Report

The [TogetherBC 2019 report](#) noted that the 2018-base MBM was unable to be used. However, the 2020 report, listed as being due circa October 2021 will use this updated base, and will also provide additional information on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Poverty Reduction in the Central Okanagan

The United Way – Southern Interior BC has partnered with the Regional District of the Central Okanagan to undertake a series of consultations throughout 2021 in support of the [development of a Central Okanagan Poverty and Wellness Strategy](#) (COPAWS). This will embed aspects of TogetherBC and build on the regional [Community Wellness Analysis](#) released in 2020.

Additional Data: Census 2021

[Census 2021](#) will add additional data to conversation around households and income, as well as novel insights with items such as [Veteran status](#). However, based on prior timelines, the data collected via Census 2021 may not be available until 2022.

The Kelowna Homelessness Research Collaborative (KHRC), is a multidisciplinary team of researchers interested in understanding and supporting the provision of services to – and the perspectives of – individuals with lived experience of homelessness or who are vulnerable to homelessness. Investigators and collaborators are primarily based in the Okanagan Valley of British Columbia, Canada.