

# CHILD POVERTY IN CANADA: LET'S FINISH THIS

## Summary:

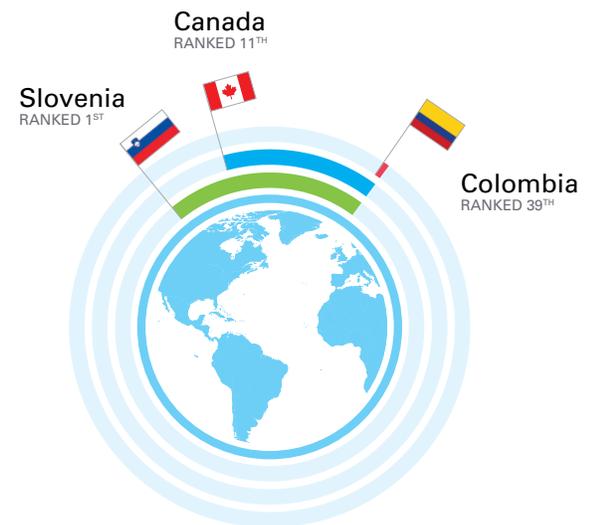
### UNICEF Report Card 18 Canadian Companion

UNICEF Report Card 18 compares levels of child poverty in the richest countries, the progress they have been making to end child poverty and how well their policies protect every child from poverty.

#### Good policies yield good rankings in UNICEF league tables of child well-being.

Levels of child poverty are highly dependent on how well governments protect children from it. Ending child poverty is achievable when an ambitious goal is coupled with effective policies. Income support policies have lifted children out of poverty and lifted Canada up the rankings in UNICEF Report Card 18.

- Canada ranked 11th of 39 high-income countries considering both the current rate of child poverty and the rate of progress to reduce it over the past decade.
- Canada's spending on social protection per child increased by 45 per cent over the past decade, from 5.9 per cent of GDP per capita in 2010 to 8.6 per cent in 2019. Child poverty fell by 23 per cent.
- Child poverty in Canada fell sharply from 21.1 per cent in 2017 to 17.8 per cent in 2021.
- Canada ranked 7th of 39 countries for progress to reduce child poverty between 2012 and 2021. Only six countries had a more substantial decline in child poverty.
- Over the past decade, child poverty rose in 13 (one third of) high-income countries.

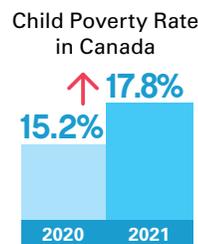


## Canada's work to lift children out of poverty is not done.

In 2021, the most recent year of available data, the child poverty rate in Canada moved in the wrong direction. Child poverty increased for the first time in many years, largely due to the end of pandemic income programs and the rising cost of living. The poverty rate rose more sharply for children than for the general population. After years of progress, Canada is a middle performer among rich countries for its rate of child poverty.

- Canada ranked 19th of 39 countries for its child poverty rate: averaging 17.2 per cent between 2019 and 2021.
- More than one million children in Canada are growing up in poverty.
- Three countries have a child poverty rate at or below 10 per cent: Denmark, Slovenia and Finland.
- Child poverty in Canada made a U-turn in 2021, rising to 17.8 per cent from 15.2 per cent in 2020.
- Child poverty rose in 2021 in every province except Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland, with the greatest increases in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.
- The child poverty rate in Canada ranges widely, from 14 per cent in Quebec to 38 per cent in the territories.
- Even in the world's richest countries, some children's basic needs are not met. The impacts of poverty, discrimination and exclusion in Canada are evident in children's nutrition, health and education status:
  - » Children have the highest rate of food insecurity among all age groups in Canada – 24 per cent in 2022, which translates to almost 1.8 million children. This is an increase from 1.4 million children in 2021, co-occurring with the rise in child poverty.
  - » Canada ranked 33rd of 43 countries for the rate of overweight children, an indicator of poor diets, at 31 per cent.
  - » Canada ranked 34th of 43 countries for under-five mortality, with a rate of 5.0 per thousand.
  - » Even before the pandemic strained student attendance, 13.7 per cent of 15-year-olds were not enrolled in school in 2018. The rate was higher in only 12 of 43 high-income countries.

In this Report Card, child poverty is measured by the percentage of children in households with income below 60 per cent of the median national income (LIM-60).



Canadian 15-year-olds Not Enrolled in School (2018)



## Canada has the tools and resources to end child poverty.

Growing up in poverty is a damaging experience. Even brief exposure to poverty at a young age can shadow a child for life. As a wealthy country with one of the largest economies and one of the greatest increases in fiscal balance over the past decade, Canada can aim higher than a middle ranking among peer countries.

- Canada's level of spending on child and family benefits ranked 25th of 38 countries.
- For a single parent with two children, Canada's social protection is only 36 per cent of an average wage.
- The adequacy of Canada's social transfers (as a percentage of the average wage) decreased over the past decade, while adequacy increased in 11 of 32 countries.

### Spending on Child and Family Benefits



### Poverty among Single Parents



### Social Protection for Out-Of-Work Couples



At a time when the pandemic's impacts continue to weigh heavily on children, their right to an adequate standard of living should be Canada's priority. All levels of government in Canada should collaborate to:

- Eliminate child poverty with a low-income supplement to the Canada Child Benefit and access for administratively excluded children.
- Index provincial and territorial social assistance rates to inflation and consider a stronger role for a child income benefit to achieve a livable income for families with children.
- Guarantee every infant six months of adequately paid, protected time with a parent at birth and ratify the International Labour Organization (ILO) Maternity Protection Convention 2000 (no. 183).
- Provide every school child with healthy food at school, every school day.
- Assure every child access to quality, affordable childcare.
- Prioritize children in budget allocations and give them first call on the nation's resources. To do so, implement a child budget expenditure tracking system in fulfilment of children's rights and the United Nations' 2022 recommendation to Canada.
- Develop a Market Basket Measure for children (MBM-C) that supplements the MBM for families with children and includes goods and services to meet their specific needs and developmental opportunities, taking into account children's views.

# Leaving children in poverty is a choice.

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