



CHILD POVERTY IN CANADA: LET'S FINISH THIS

UNICEF REPORT CARD 18
Canadian Companion

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Canadian Companion to UNICEF Report Card 18

CHILD POVERTY IN CANADA: LET'S FINISH THIS

This Canadian Companion distills and interprets data from UNICEF Report Card 18, Child Poverty in Countries in the OECD/EU. The UNICEF Report Card series monitors and compares economically advanced countries' performance in securing children's rights and advancing their well-being.

Visit [unicef.ca/irc18](https://www.unicef.ca/irc18) to access these reports and background papers. Data sources and full references are cited in: UNICEF Office of Research, Child Poverty in Countries in the OECD/EU, UNICEF Report Card 18, UNICEF Innocenti – Global Office of Research and Foresight, Florence, 2023.

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CHILD POVERTY IN CANADA: LET'S FINISH THIS

Summary:

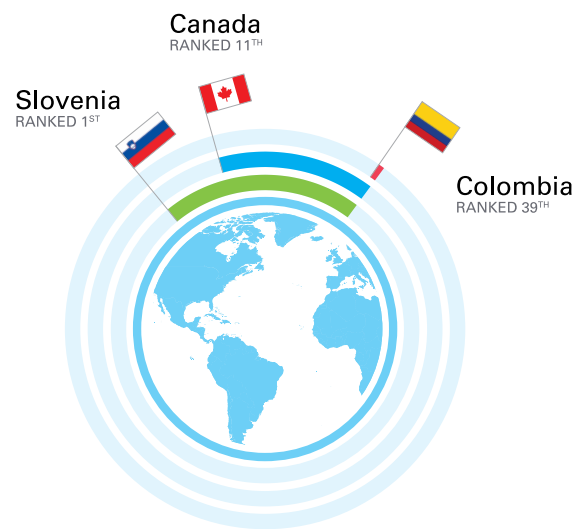
UNICEF Report Card 18 Canadian Companion

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.

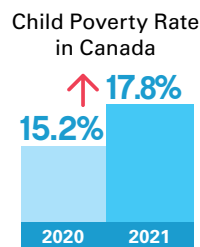


Canada's work to lift children out of poverty is not done.

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).



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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A Message from UNICEF Canada President and CEO Sevaun Palvetzian

As any parent knows, school report cards can generate a range of emotions. Yet report cards are important tools that give us timely feedback on where a child is performing well, where they are progressing, where strengths and weaknesses exist and where areas of improvement need focused attention and care.

For more than 20 years, UNICEF has produced a Report Card on the state of children here in Canada and in other high-income countries. The ability for us to track our progress for children amongst dozens of peer countries shows Canada where we are performing well and where improvement is necessary.

This year's Report Card (our 18th) tells an important story, at an incredibly important time. The focus is on child poverty. As you read this, here in Canada child poverty is rising for the first time in years, as income supports have stagnated while the cost of living rises.

The Report Card has some results that have earned Canada a notable place amongst our peers. For example, the Canada Child Benefit (CCB) is a successful policy that has driven a generational drop in child poverty, earning Canada a ranking of 11th among 39 of our peer countries considering both the current poverty rate and progress to reduce it.

To add to this progress, all levels of government have formed agreements to expand quality childcare across the country. This holds the promise of better child outcomes and will help alleviate child poverty.

Canada's recent strides to invest more in child-focused income benefits and childcare demonstrate a renewed commitment to its youngest residents. This traction can't be taken for granted; nor can it afford to stagnate or stall out.

Because Canada has not earned top grades in every area. Despite progress to reduce it, Canada remains only a middle performer on the rate of child poverty, ranking 19th among 39 countries and leaving 17.8 per cent of children poor in 2021. Just as concerning, the Report Card documents a recent rise in child poverty for the first time in years. Despite being the most vulnerable population in our nation, poverty rose more sharply for children than for the general population.

Children today are facing a 'polycrisis' of generational shocks and stresses: the most severe pandemic in a century, the fastest price inflation in a generation and a record-breaking rise in temperatures as the climate changes. The poorest children are the most vulnerable to these headwinds. Some children experience chronic poverty and discrimination for their entire lives – a perpetual state of emergency.

More than one million children in Canada live in poverty. About one in three infants has a parent who is denied access to parental leave. Close to one in three children goes to school hungry. Thousands of children cannot yet be assured quality childcare when they need it. Indigenous, Black and other racialized children and children with disabilities are more likely to be left behind.

These are not the measures that any nation can feel pride in. Surely we can – and ought to – do better than that in Canada. UNICEF Canada is working to ensure that every child is included in social protection and that leaders across our country have children at the top of their consciousness and their priority lists.

Child poverty is not a natural or an intractable occurrence. High-income countries like Canada 'choose' their levels of child poverty through their policies. The evidence is growing and impossible to ignore: the trifecta of 'family-friendly' social protection policies – income benefits, parental leave and childcare – get children off to the best start in life and have the highest economic returns. On the other hand, leaving children in poverty can scar them for a lifetime and drags down economic, social and environmental progress.

Canada has choices to make. We hope that this year's Report Card – with the invaluable data it provides – helps us to make the right ones.

Sincerely,



Sevaun Palvetzian

President and Chief Executive Officer
UNICEF Canada

Uprising: Messages from Young People

Inflation is rising.
Child poverty is rising.
Children and youth are uprising.

"I don't go out with friends because I can't afford that lifestyle. I don't go to events because transportation, restaurants...etc. are way out of my budget."

"Having to work multiple jobs while doing full-time school is so hard and defeating."

"People judge my family for the little help we get."

"I was forced to work extra hours to afford food and housing, leading to me being unable to dedicate time to school and being forced to drop out of my college courses."

"We should be able to actually live our lives, not wonder if we can survive paycheque to paycheque."

"I think a lot of young people are struggling to live paycheque to paycheque with no end in sight. I want to see more financial help for young people to find a way out of poverty."

"I have to work full-time night shifts while attending school full-time just to scrape by."

"I'm hoping to see a big move from the federal government to support young people. Young people are crucial for a healthy society, and it's beneficial to put resources towards them."



U-Report is a polling platform developed by UNICEF for young people ages 13 to 24. It is a unique way to get a real-time pulse check of their views about issues they care about; to understand how different groups of youth are affected by decisions, policies, services and events; and to involve youth in decisions that affect them. There are more than 1,500 U-Reporters in Canada, located in every province and territory.

UNICEF Canada asked U-Reporters for their perspectives on their material security and well-being. Look for the U-Report icon in this Report Card to see what young people in Canada had to say.

Visit www.ureportcanada.ca for more information and to sign up for U-Report Canada.

A BRIEF HISTORY:

Child Poverty In Canada

A Brief History of Child Poverty in Canada

In 1989, the year that the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted, the Parliament of Canada unanimously declared a national goal to eliminate child poverty by the year 2000. It was an ambitious but achievable commitment to fulfil children's rights. In 2015, Canada pledged to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goal of ending poverty "in all its forms everywhere" by 2030.

We are now more than 30 years past the 1989 commitment, more than 20 years past its target date and halfway to the target date for the Sustainable Development Goals, and until recently progress to eliminate child poverty had been limited. From an international perspective, Canada's performance had been uninspiring. Canada had been a low performer among wealthy countries in child poverty and, relatedly, in other indicators of children's rights and well-being measured in UNICEF Report Cards.

A generational decline in child poverty that began in 2016 gave hope for a fairer society for every child. The Canada Child Benefit (CCB), introduced in 2016, is a progressive, near-universal income transfer that lifts many children out of the depths of poverty. The Canadian government indexed the CCB to inflation in 2018 and legislated poverty reduction targets in 2019. The marked drop in child

poverty that began before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic was accelerated in 2020 by temporary pandemic income benefits, particularly the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB). While much of the world slid into deeper poverty in the first year of the pandemic, Canada's level of child poverty fell by more in a single year than it had over the previous 20 years. Child poverty fell from 18.5 per cent in 2019 to 15.2 per cent in 2020.

However, in 2021, the most recent year of available data, the child poverty rate moved in the wrong direction. For the first time in many years, child poverty increased – from 15.2 per cent in 2020 to 17.8 per cent in 2021, based on the Low Income Measure (LIM-60). According to the Market Basket Measure (MBM), Canada's official federal poverty yardstick, child poverty increased from 4.7 per cent to 6.4 per cent. Just as concerning, the increase in child poverty was more substantial than the increase in poverty in the general population.

Canada's wealth gap between the most and least wealthy (65.1 percentage points) rose along with child poverty: the wealth gap was 1.1 percentage points higher in 2023 than in 2022 – the fastest increase on record since the Great Recession of 2010 (Statistics Canada 2023b).

UNICEF Report Card 18 provides more data and context to understand the current state of material deprivation of children in Canada by comparing its performance to other wealthy nations. **This reveals two fundamental takeaways:**

Key Takeaway #1



Good policies yield good rankings in UNICEF league tables of child well-being. Reducing child poverty is achievable when ambitious commitment is supported by meaningful social protection policies. These policies have pushed down child poverty and pushed Canada up the rankings in UNICEF Report Card 18. **Canada achieved 7th place among 39 rich countries based on its progress to reduce child poverty.**

Key Takeaway #2



Canada's work to lift children out of poverty is not done. Whether the recent rise in child poverty is a temporary anomaly or the start of a pernicious trend is up to policymakers and political leaders. In any case, there is a gap to close, as **Canada is still a middle performer among wealthy countries for its level of child poverty, ranking 19th of 39 countries.**

The Campaign 2000 coalition warned Canadians in 2022 that a rise in child poverty was likely as pandemic income benefits expired and the CCB's effectiveness to alleviate child poverty plateaued. Report Card 18 shows how much more Canada can reduce child poverty by measuring the gap between Canada and the best performing countries. Three rich countries achieve a child poverty rate at or below 10 percent, compared to more than 17 per cent in Canada. Closing this gap is the difference between leaving more than one million children in poverty or providing every child in Canada with a life of fairness and opportunity.

In the world's richest countries, child poverty is not just a function of chance or necessity, but of policy and priority. Leaving children in poverty is a choice. This Canadian Companion to Report Card 18 lays out the implications for children and the policy choices that will determine their future – and ours.



What is the Canada Child Benefit?

The Canada Child Benefit (CCB) is a federal, income-tested (near universal), non-taxable income (cash) benefit meant to help eligible families with the cost of raising children under 18 years of age. It is the most significant social transfer policy for children in Canada, though provinces and territories also provide child benefits and social assistance. A parent who is primarily eligible for the CCB must live with a child and be primarily responsible for the child's care. The parent's status mediates a child's eligibility, as the parent must be a Canadian resident for tax purposes: a Canadian citizen, permanent resident, protected person, eligible temporary resident or individual registered or entitled to be registered under the Indian Act. The CCB amount each parent receives is based on several factors, including the number of children in their care, their marital status, their adjusted family net income from the previous year's tax return and the age of each child.

As of July 2023, each child under age six is eligible for up to \$7,437 per year (an increase of \$440 from July 2022 due to indexation to core inflation), and each child between 6 and 17 years old is eligible for up to \$6,275 (an increase of \$372 from July 2022). Families with an adjusted net income under \$34,863 receive the maximum amount for each child, and payments gradually decrease for those with a net income above that threshold.



Campaign 2000: End Child and Family Poverty

Campaign 2000 is a national coalition of civil society organizations, academics, researchers and service organizations concerned with child poverty and its impacts in Canada. UNICEF Canada is a proud long-standing member of the Campaign 2000 coalition.

Campaign 2000 was first established in 1989 to hold Parliament to account on its promise to end child and family poverty by the new millennium. It continues to advocate for increased government supports for children and families, facilitate knowledge-sharing through training and webinars, and publish annual national and subnational report cards on the state of child and family poverty in Canada. Learn more at campaign2000.ca.

Five Measures of Poverty

Measuring poverty by income is the predominant approach guiding public policy. It should be complemented with children's own views and with multidimensional measures of deprivation.

The most common measurement of poverty in high-income countries is the **Low Income Measure (LIM)**, and it is the measure used in UNICEF Report Card 18. The international 'gold standard' for measuring income-based poverty, used by the European Union (EU), the LIM-60 measures the number of children in households with an income less than 60 per cent of the median national income, using the modified OECD equivalization method. Child poverty rates are calculated as the number of children in poverty divided by the number of children in the population (aged 0–17 inclusive). The LIM income threshold can be set at 50 per cent, 60 per cent or some other determination, but LIM-60 acknowledges that quality of life and fairness of opportunity relative to the average standard of living matters for children's well-being. It recognizes that children require more than having basic needs met to thrive in a wealthy country and sets a minimum income for social inclusion and well-being. The median after-tax income in Canada in 2021 was \$68,400.

Canada's official federal measure of poverty is the **Market Basket Measure (MBM)**, which was entrenched in legislation in 2019 with the *Poverty Reduction Act*, so this Canadian Companion to UNICEF Report Card 18 also references this measurement. The MBM is a consumption-based measure that is calculated by costing out a collection or 'basket' of goods and services that are viewed as minimal necessities for survival and a basic quality of life, including food, shelter, clothing and a category of 'other' essentials. The cost of the basket is calculated for distinct geographic regions across Canada – an approach that reflects variations in the cost of living. The MBM is annually indexed to inflation, and its contents are periodically reviewed. Children in families with a disposable income less than a specified threshold relative to the basket cost for their region are considered to be living in poverty.

The MBM is a unique Canadian approach and has no utility for international comparison.

The 2021 Canadian Income Survey (CIS) from which both MBM and LIM measures of poverty are derived excludes some people in the deepest poverty, including those living in the territories, on reserves, in institutions and in extremely remote areas with very low population density due to how the survey is administered. As such, these measures likely underestimate the number of children in poverty.

Most high-income countries measure both income and other dimensions of deprivation, but approaches to **multidimensional poverty measurement** vary considerably among countries and institutions. This variability reflects different social norms and perceptions regarding living standards, as well as the availability of data that can capture different aspects of child deprivation and material security. The EU employs both a relative monetary poverty line and multidimensional deprivation measurement to monitor progress on poverty and social exclusion. No jurisdiction in Canada has an official multidimensional index, though the federal Poverty Reduction Strategy has developed a dashboard of deprivation indicators including food insecurity.

Overall income inequality (measured by the Gini coefficient, or the 'wealth gap' between the top and bottom income levels) is yet another indicator of children's inclusion and well-being. Income inequality is strongly associated with the level of child poverty in rich countries (e.g., Canada's levels of income inequality and child poverty are both average compared to other high-income nations).

Children's own perspectives on deprivation and broader well-being are rarely considered, but some countries are doing so to complement monetary poverty measurement. Both overall income inequality and deprivation measures informed by children's views correlate strongly to children's self-reported level of life satisfaction – a proxy indicator of their well-being.

WHERE DOES CANADA STAND?

Monitoring Child Poverty in Rich Countries

Where Does Canada Stand?

Monitoring Child Poverty in Rich Countries

UNICEF released its first Report Card on the state of children in high-income countries more than 20 years ago. The UNICEF Report Card series has helped answer these questions:

- 1 How well are children in the world's richest countries experiencing their childhoods?
- 2 Are childhoods getting better?
- 3 What will help countries with similar resources achieve similar great outcomes for every child?

Some UNICEF Report Cards, most recently UNICEF Report Card 16 released in 2020, have measured the overall state of children and youth, bringing together many aspects of their material, physical, educational, social and mental well-being in a multidimensional index. Others, like this Report Card, have focused in detail on a particular dimension of children's lives, such as poverty, childcare or education. The first UNICEF Report Card, published in 2000, focused on child poverty due to its extensive impacts on children's lives. Report Cards in 2005, 2012 and 2014 revisited the progress of the richest countries to eliminate child poverty. Report Card 18 presents the most current data available on child poverty in the world's richest countries and the trends over the past decade, following the Great Recession and a global pandemic.

UNICEF Report Cards measure aspects of child and youth well-being in 'absolute' terms (for instance, the child poverty rate in Canada) and absolute change (for instance, whether child poverty is falling in Canada). The Report Cards also measure childhood in 'relative' terms with rankings of countries (for instance, whether child poverty is higher in Canada than in other countries or falling faster than in other countries). Both absolute and relative measures in this Report Card provide important information about our greatest challenges:

What aspects of life are better or worse for children, how good is our progress and how high can we aim considering what is achievable in practice?

UNICEF compares the world's wealthiest countries because countries with similar resources and capacities should achieve similar results for children.

Child poverty rates range widely, from 10 to 30 per cent across high-income countries, as does investment in child social protection (from 2 to 16 per cent of GDP per capita). If all rich countries created good conditions and achieved the same good outcomes for children, they would all be clustered together at the top of the UNICEF league tables. The top-performing countries in the UNICEF rankings set the bar for what is achievable and help countries understand how to get there. Comparing countries reveals that differences in child well-being exist mainly because countries have different policies. Countries have risen and fallen in the league tables due to changes in their child policies. Therefore, better public policies will achieve better outcomes for children.





About the Report Card Data, Indicators and Rankings

Different indicators can measure different aspects of children's poverty and material security. However, data for international comparison is limited, particularly for non-income measures of poverty. UNICEF Report Card 18 indicators and data are drawn from the most recent, high-quality administrative data sets and international surveys available. Most data are collected by governments or with government support. UNICEF Report Card 18 and its Working Papers series (available at www.unicef-irc.org) include discussion of data parameters and gaps, the rationale behind including and constructing indicators, details of the construction of the league tables, and recommendations for the development of new approaches to measuring child poverty and material security, including the perspectives of children themselves.

UNICEF Report Cards use national averages to compare the overall state of children in rich countries. National averages help reveal patterns that may not be visible in smaller areas (such as provinces, territories or communities) or with smaller data sets. They are also necessary for international comparisons. National averages can mask inequalities between children in a country; however, they can tell us how many children are deprived of material conditions like adequate housing and how many are excluded from policies and programs like adequate social protection.

National averages can also be used to reveal inequities in other ways. If local data is available, national averages can facilitate the potential to benchmark the state of children at provincial, territorial and local levels, or if the data can be disaggregated (e.g., categorized by gender, race or immigration status) groups of children can be compared to the national average. Unfortunately, data for smaller geographic areas and certain groups of children experiencing inequities are not available for all indicators. Data about First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples are also subject to sovereignty over collection, possession, ownership and use of that data.

It is beyond the UNICEF Report Card's scope to provide within-country comparisons for all countries; however, Campaign 2000 Report Cards on Child Poverty provide these comparisons for Canada. This Canadian Companion refers to complementary data and examples to illustrate some of the inequalities experienced by children and youth in Canada.

UNICEF RANKINGS:

Rising Up by Bringing Down Child Poverty

UNICEF Rankings:

Rising Up by Bringing Down Child Poverty

For more than twenty years, UNICEF Report Cards have tracked the relative progress of rich countries in achieving children's rights and well-being. A general pattern has emerged: Canada has fallen in the league table rankings over time even as its national wealth has continued a steady rise. This raises the question, where are the dividends for children? The Report Cards have revealed that Canada's high level of wealth was not being shared fairly to create the best possible childhood conditions. In particular, Canada has been investing less than its peer countries in social protection policies for children – the fundamental, 'family-friendly' trifecta of income benefits, childcare and parental leave that affect so many child outcomes. After years of disappointing rankings, Canadians have begun to ask whether we can ever do better.

UNICEF Report Card 18 shows us that better is indeed possible. The UNICEF league tables in Report Card 18 quantify and compare the performance of the world's 39 wealthiest countries by measuring children's experiences of poverty and the policy responses.¹ Canada has broken into the top third of the world's wealthy nations, ranking 11th in the league table, a combined measure of the most recent levels of child poverty and the rate of progress to reduce it over the past decade (see figure 1).


Canada's ranking illustrates how quickly a well-designed policy tool can mitigate child poverty. This ranking is chiefly earned by Canada's significant decline in child poverty between 2012 and 2021. Using the Low Income Measure (the share of children living in a household where disposable income is less than 60 per cent of the national median), the rate of child poverty in Canada fell from 21.1 per cent in 2017 to 18.5 per cent in 2019 with the introduction of the CCB, and then dramatically declined to 15.2 per cent in 2020 due in good measure to the CERB. While child poverty fell in 26 countries over the past decade, only six countries had a more substantial decline than Canada, where child poverty fell by 23 per cent – from 22.2 per cent to 17.2 per cent. Canada moved from 22nd place to 19th over that time. Even with the concerning rise in child poverty to 17.8 per cent in 2021, Canada sustained its relatively good ranking in the UNICEF Report Card.²

Despite Canada's rate of progress to reduce child poverty in recent years, it is a middle performer for the level of child poverty, which sits at 17.8 per cent. Ranking 19th of 39 countries for the average rate of child poverty between 2019 and 2021, Canada has a considerable gap to close in order to join the best-performing countries, which have rates at 10 per cent or less (see figure 3). Three countries, including Denmark and Finland, meet this bar. They demonstrate what is possible in fulfilling children's right to an adequate standard of living.

¹ The Report Card focuses on the countries that are members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and/or the European Union (EU).

² The Report Card averages the rate of child poverty over the most recent three years (2019–2021) to smooth fluctuations in rates that may be attributed to difficulties in data collection during the COVID-19 pandemic and changes in measurement approaches in some countries.

Figure 1: UNICEF league table of child income poverty in rich countries

Overall rank	Country	Rank of recent rate (Average 2019-21)	Rank of change (2012-14 to 2019-21)
1	Slovenia	10	-31.4
2	Poland	14.1	-37.6
3	Latvia	16.3	-31
4	Republic of Korea	15.7	-29
5	Estonia	14.8	-23.4
6	Lithuania	18.3	-30.6
7	Czechia	11.6	-14.5
8	Japan	14.8	-18.7
9	Ireland	14.8	-18.5
10	Croatia	16.6	-21.8
 11	Canada	17.2	-22.7
12	Belgium	14.9	-17
13	Portugal	19.3	-22.5
14	Finland	10.1	0
15	Denmark	9.9	3.5
16	Malta	19.8	-18.2
17	Netherlands	13.5	0.7
18	Greece	22.3	-17.2
19	New Zealand	21.1	-11.7
20	Norway	12	10.1
21	Slovakia	18.9	-4.9
22	Sweden	18	-2.4
23	Iceland	12.4	11
24	Cyprus	15.6	4
25	Germany	15.5	5
26	Australia	17.1	1.7
27	Chile	21.6	-7.7
28	Romania	29	-22.5
29	Austria	19.2	5.3
30	Switzerland	18	10.3
31	Bulgaria	26.1	-8.3
32	United States	26.2	-6.7
33	France	19.9	10.4
34	Italy	25.5	-0.8
35	Luxembourg	24.5	3.7
36	Spain	28	-4
37	United Kingdom	20.7	20
38	Türkiye	33.8	1.5
39	Colombia	35.8	-2.1

RANKING: TOP THIRD MIDDLE THIRD **BOTTOM THIRD**

A closer look at the league table rankings across rich countries reveals a familiar story – with some surprises. Report Card readers are accustomed to seeing the Nordic countries in or near the top 10. These countries are typically among the best performers in UNICEF league tables, with high national wealth and good child and youth well-being indicators that reflect strong and inclusive child policies. Yet they have diverged in their progress to reduce child poverty. Finland (ranked 14th) has a much lower rate of child poverty than Canada's, at 10.1 per cent, but has failed to make progress in recent years. Denmark (ranked 15th) and Norway (ranked 20th) are in an unusual position in the middle third of the league table, mainly because child poverty has increased in these countries over the past decade. Still, their rates of child poverty at 9.9 and 12 per cent, respectively, are substantially lower than Canada's. A number of Eastern European countries top the rankings: Slovenia (ranked 1st), Poland, Japan and Ireland have made significant progress and have achieved among the lowest rates of child poverty.

Child poverty rates vary considerably between rich countries. This variation has little relationship to the wealth of each country and much to do with the adequacy and inclusion of their social protection policies for children.

Ten countries have a similar or lower level of national income compared to Canada but manage to achieve lower rates of child poverty (see figure 2). The rate of child poverty also varies widely within Canada; compared to the Canadian average of 17.8 per cent, child poverty rates range from 14 per cent in Quebec to 29 per cent in Manitoba and 38 per cent in the territories (see figure 6). This variation demonstrates the important role of child-focused social protection policies for all levels of government.

The wide range of child poverty rates across the UNICEF league table offers two lessons:

- 1 Children's outcomes are malleable with effective public policies and, therefore, so are national rankings in UNICEF league tables.
- 2 Child poverty can be rapidly reduced through adequate and inclusive income transfers.

Figure 2: National income and child poverty levels show little relationship in 2021



Figure 3: Child poverty rates vary widely across high-income countries

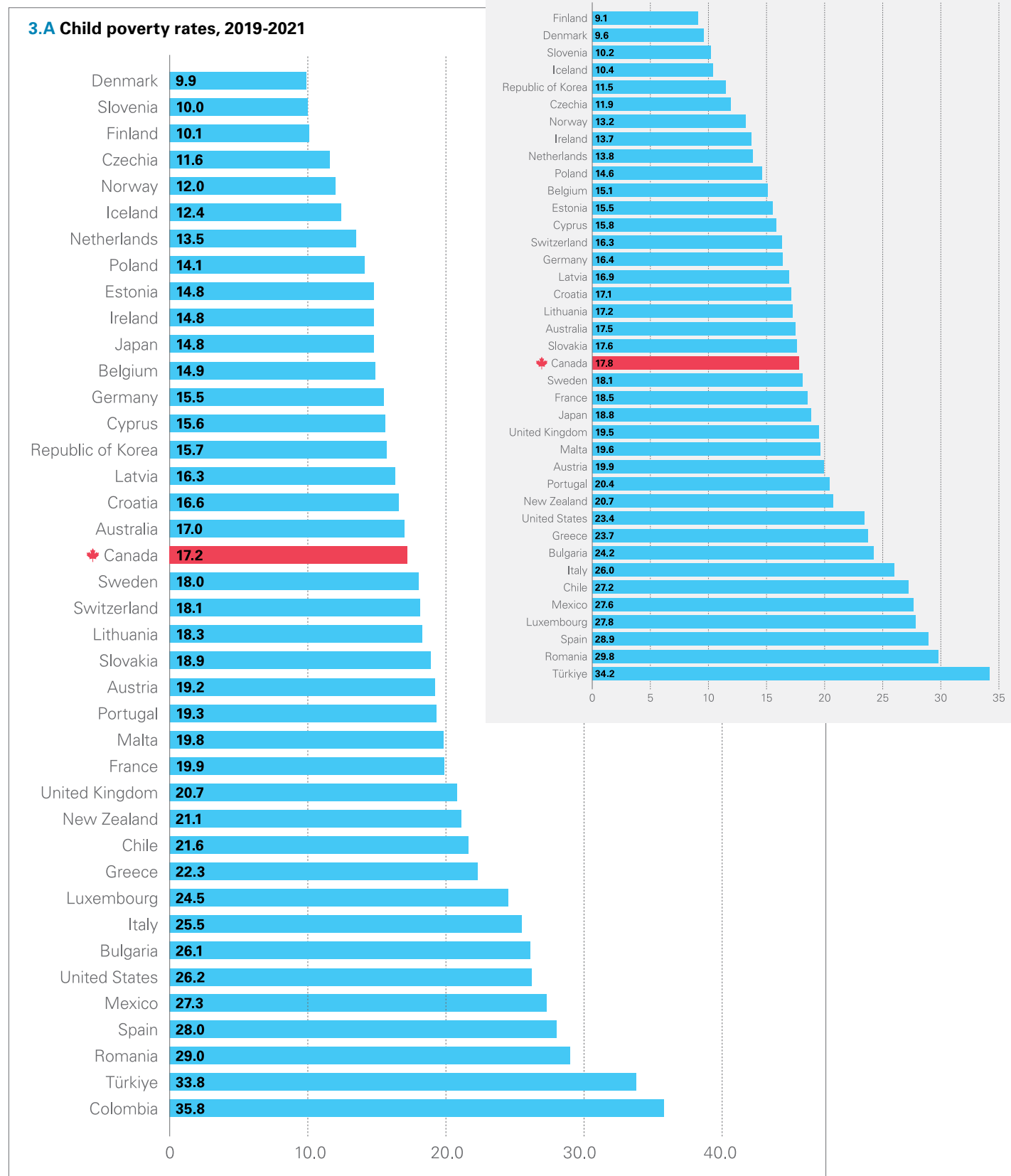
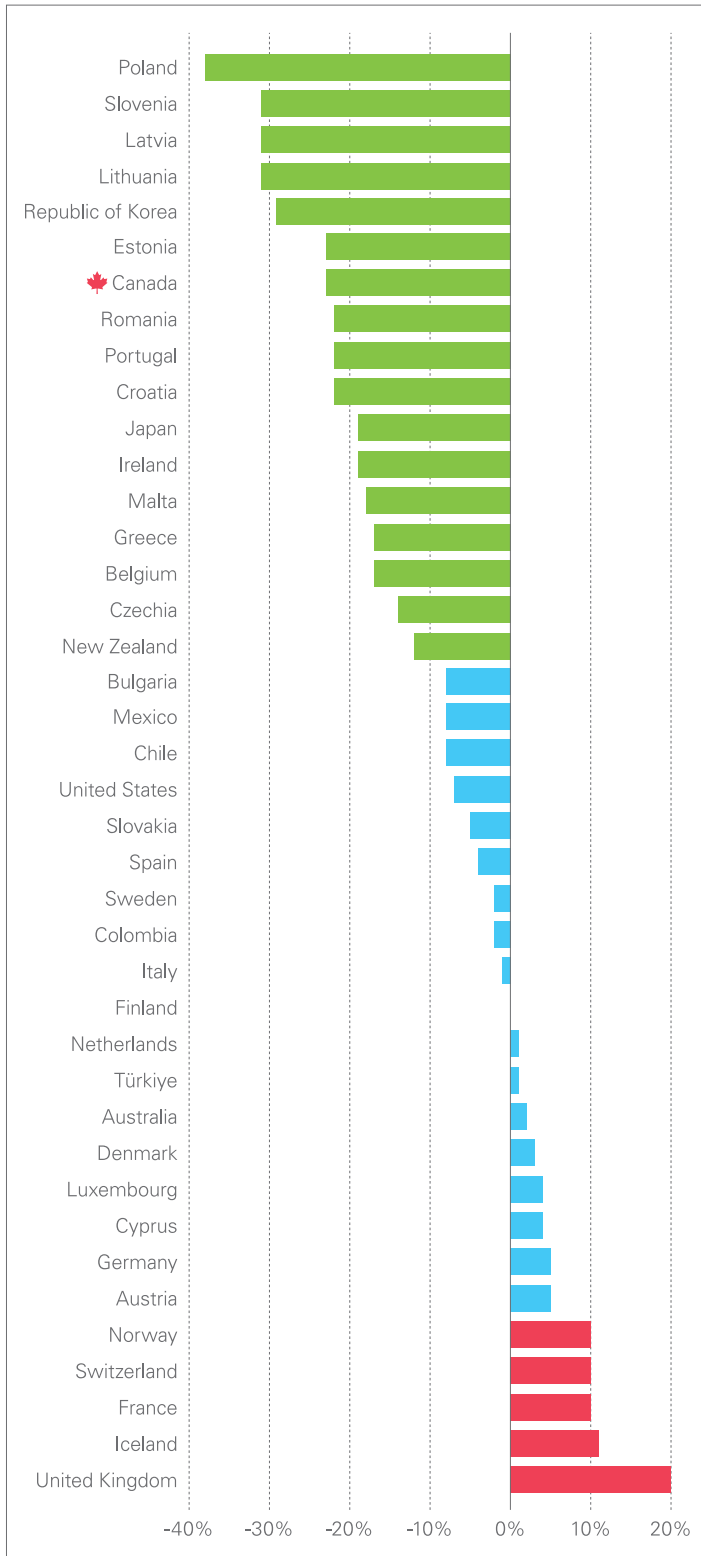


Figure 4: Progress to reduce child poverty in high-income countries diverged over the past decade (2012–2021)



Making a U-Turn on Child Poverty

A number of rich countries allowed their rates of child poverty to rise in the years since the Great Recession and through the COVID-19 pandemic. The general trend of falling child poverty bifurcated, with child poverty rising in 13 countries and falling in 26 since 2012 (see figure 4). While 2020 was the apex of child poverty alleviation in Canada, 2021 saw a turn in the wrong direction. Child poverty jumped from 15.2 per cent in 2020 to 17.8 per cent in 2021 according to the LIM-60 standard (see figure 5). Using the MBM, child poverty also climbed substantially from 4.7 per cent in 2020 to 6.4 per cent in 2021 (see text box 3 for a description of these distinct poverty yardsticks). The increase in child poverty (1.7 percentage points according to the MBM) was larger than the increase for the general population in Canada (1 percentage point). Child poverty rose in every province except Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland, with the greatest increases in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia (see figure 6). Female-led single-parent families, families in Indigenous communities and families with racialized or disabled children were most vulnerable to rising poverty. As 2021 is the most recent year for which data is available, only time will tell if the increase in child poverty is a short-term anomaly or a ‘U-turn’ into a negative trend. Canada need not wait to find out before taking urgent policy action.

Figure 5: Child poverty fell in Canada until 2021

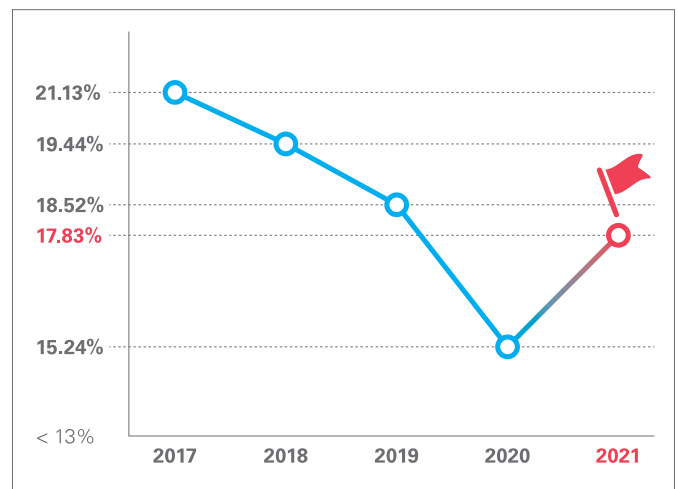


Figure 6: Child poverty rose in every Canadian province except PEI and Newfoundland in 2021

PROVINCE	2021	2020
Manitoba	28.77%	24.41%
Nova Scotia	25.99%	18.76%
New Brunswick	22.23%	13.98%
Prince Edward Island	21.44%	25.73%
Ontario	19.55%	16.96%
Alberta	17.08%	14.06%
Saskatchewan	15.92%	15.49%
Newfoundland	15.55%	20.87%
British Columbia	15.09%	12.07%
Quebec	13.98%	12.24%

The sharp rise in child poverty was predictable.

Pandemic income benefits faded by 2021, representing 11 per cent of all government transfers compared to 28 per cent the previous year (Canadian Income Survey, 2021). The CCB was never sufficient to lift every child out of poverty. Families earning the lowest incomes have been less able to cope with high and sustained price inflation. Core inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), drove up the average price of a basket of consumer goods by 3.4 per cent in 2021. In 2022, the CPI rose to a 40-year high of 8.1 per cent. While year-over-year growth in the CPI has since subsided, it remains higher than the average over the past four decades (Statistics Canada, 2023a). Food prices inflated even higher than the CPI in 2023 (9.1 per cent), and housing costs have been rising with interest rate increases intended to tame inflation, constraining the conditions upon which children depend for material security.

Inflation has been described as the ‘cruellest tax’ for its disproportionate impact on children and families. Inflation and rising interest rates diminish the capacity of the lowest income earners to meet their needs. Over time, their resources to manage higher costs become ever more depleted. The Parliamentary Budget Officer’s June 2023 report tracked wide fluctuations in the purchasing power of households. Cost-of-living increases outweighed any income gains for most households (Statistics Canada, 2023b). In June 2022, inflation contributed to a 25 per cent drop in the purchasing power of households with the lowest incomes compared to just 0.5 per cent for the highest income quintile. Households with the lowest incomes spent 23 per cent of their income on food compared to 5.2 per cent for those with the highest incomes. By the end of 2022, more than one third (35 per cent) of the population lived in a household experiencing difficulty meeting its necessary expenses. Of people living with children, 42 per cent were more likely to have difficulty meeting their transportation, housing, food, clothing and other necessary expenses. More than six in 10 Canadians in the lowest income quintile (63 per cent), which includes many lone parents, reported being very concerned about their ability to meet everyday expenses.

High prices are not the main reason some families can't afford food and housing – poverty is.

Low-income households have relied heavily on income transfers to weather inflation (Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer of Canada, 2023) but these transfers have not been sufficient to stave off deprivation. Canada's central bank interest rate has risen more than the rate increases in many other high-income countries (UNICEF and ILO, 2023). Although the CCB is indexed to core inflation and increased by 6.3 per cent from the previous year in July 2023, it is not indexed quarterly as are income benefits for senior adults. Yet food and housing prices have surged above the average core inflation rate and have fluctuated dramatically throughout the year. Social assistance rates in many provinces and territories are not indexed to inflation, and in most cases base rates have not increased in many years. Because low-income households rely almost as much on social assistance as on the CCB to offset market income poverty, many low-income households have actually experienced a widening gap between income transfers and the average wage. All factors considered, Canada has not introduced sufficient mitigating social policy measures to prevent a rise in child poverty.³

Despite progress to reduce poverty for all groups of children, rates of poverty remained higher than the national average for First Nations children living on reserve (37.4 per cent), First Nations children living off-reserve (24 per cent), Inuit children (19.4 per cent), Métis children (15.2 per cent), Black children (18.6 per cent) and racialized children (15.1 per cent) in 2020. This further demonstrates the insufficiency and inequity of income support policies (Campaign 2000, 2022). Children who identify as 2SLGBTQ, those in lone-parent families, children in and from alternative care, children with disabilities, and children whose parents have precarious immigration status are also more likely to live in poverty (NCAP, 2022). Children in families with multiple vulnerabilities are particularly at risk of rising child poverty with higher inflation and interest rates (Statistics Canada, 2023b). The Government of Canada cannot realize its legislated target and achieve the Sustainable Development Goal to reduce poverty by at least 50 per cent relative to 2015 levels by 2030 unless it achieves this target for every child.

³ In response to the high cost of living, the federal government, eight provinces and one territory made one-time cost-of-living payments in 2023. In addition, two provinces moved to index all or part of their social assistance benefits to inflation.

CHILDREN'S MATERIAL DEPRIVATION:

Some Children Are Deprived of More Than an Adequate Family Income

Some Children Are Deprived of More Than an Adequate Family Income

The level of child poverty is perhaps the single most meaningful indicator of how well a government lives up to its responsibility to fulfil children’s rights. The right to an adequate standard of living is a requirement for the realization of many other rights, including good nutrition and housing. The breadth of children’s rights in the Convention on the Rights of the Child is the basis to consider both family income and the broader material security of children. Multidimensional measures provide a wider perspective on children’s experiences of deprivation, including whether they are nourished, have adequate housing and are included in education and health systems. This approach reveals limitations in the adequacy of social protection (i.e., income transfers), which can limit the effectiveness of conditions, policies and services (e.g., education) that help to ensure every


child has the material security and opportunity to which they are entitled (UNICEF and ILO, 2023). However, some children are deprived of adequate housing, nutrition, other material conditions and access to services even if their family lives above the income poverty line. Inclusive, accessible, quality public services are key to reducing multidimensional child poverty. Weaknesses in one dimension can undermine another, and, conversely, improvements in one can help achieve coherence and effectiveness across others (Global Coalition to End Child Poverty, 2022).

Canada has pledged to fulfil children’s rights to material security and the optimal development of every child (articles 2 and 6, Convention on the Rights of the Child). Measuring the achievement of these rights is challenging, particularly to compare achievement across high-income countries using common indicators. Using the best available data, the indicators below provide a lens on children’s multidimensional material security – or deprivation – in Canada (see figure 7). What the data reveal is a pattern of deprivation long in the making, amplified in some ways by the COVID-19 pandemic and price inflation.



Children Have Rights to Material Security	
MATERIAL SECURITY	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
Income	Every child has the right to an adequate standard of living (articles 6, 26 and 27)
Housing	Every child has the right to a safe and healthy place to live (articles 6 and 24)
Information	Every child has the right to information from diverse sources (articles 16 and 17)
Water and Sanitation	Every child has the right to clean water, enough nutritious food, a clean and safe environment and the best health care possible (articles 6 and 24)
Health Care	
Education	Every child has the right to an education that helps them develop to their fullest potential, respectful of diverse cultures (articles 28, 29 and 30)

Figure 7: Selected indicators of child material deprivation in high-income countries

	EDUCATION		HEALTH		NUTRITION	INFO	HOUSING	WATER	SANITATION
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	ECEC Access	Enrollment at 15	Under 5 Mortality	Vaccination MCV2	Overweight	Internet	Own Room	Water	Sanitation
	%	%	Per 1000	%	%	%	%	Daily	Daily
	2020	2018	2021	2021	2019	2018	2018	2019	2019
Australia	18.0	10.6	3.7	6	33	2	7	12	2
Austria	0.6	11.1	3.7	12	26	2	11	3	6
Belgium	3.2	6.4	4.1	15	23	1	8	4	2
Bulgaria	15.9	28.0	6.3	14	27	3	12	87	8
Canada 	0.7	13.7	5.0	17	31	2	8	4	5
Chile	2.9	10.7	6.6	42	34	12	17	31	16
Colombia	0.7	38.1	12.8	14	24	33	32	188	42
Costa Rica	1.5	37.2	7.6	31	30	17	29	95	8
Croatia	6.6	10.9	4.6	10	26	1	15	55	10
Cyprus	0.7	7.8	2.8	12	32	0	0	6	2
Czechia	4.3	4.6	2.8	10	26	1	22	40	3
Denmark	0.3	12.2	3.6	6	24	0	3	3	2
Estonia	6.8	6.9	2	16	19	1	10	60	24
Finland	3.1	3.7	2.2	7	25	0	6	2	2
France	0.5	8.7	4.4	14	29	2	12	5	2
Germany	1.7	0.7	3.6	7	25	2	9	3	1
Greece	0.8	7.3	3.7	17	35	4	26	2	3
Hungary	6.1	10.4	4	1	27	2	9	56	28
Iceland		8.4	2.6		27	1	2	3	2
Ireland	1.9	3.8	3.1		29	1	12	2	4
Israel	0.1	19.1	3.4	7	34	4	0	4	3
Italy	8.0	15.4	2.6	14	34	3	33	4	3
Japan	8.2	9.1	2.3	5	13	5	14	2	0
Latvia	2.3	11.4	3.7	15	20	1	18	69	37
Lithuania	4.6	9.7	3.3	12	19	1	9	70	40
Luxembourg	1.3	12.9	2.7	10	25	3	11	3	2
Malta	1.4	2.8	5.8	7	35	2	14	3	3
Mexico	0.7	33.6	13.2	3	34	32	46	175	71
Netherlands	0.8	8.8	4.1	10	24	1	3	2	1
New Zealand	10.4	11.2	4.7	18	38	3	8	19	4
Norway	3.7	8.9	2.2	5	27	1	3	2	1
Poland	4.1	10.0	4.3	5	24	1	12	46	10
Portugal	2.7	12.7	3.1	5	30	2	18	9	10
Rep. of Korea	10.2	11.9	2.9	4	25	3	17	3	0
Romania	11.7	27.4	6.4	25	23	4	12	99	63
Slovakia	12.9	13.8	5.6	4	22	2	20	49	8
Slovenia	6.5	2.1	2.2	9	25	1	7	31	9
Spain	0.2	8.2	3	9	32	2	12	4	1
Sweden	0.3	14.3	2.5	9	23	1	5	3	2
Switzerland	0.4	11.1	3.8	6	21	1	9	2	1
Türkiye	20.5	27.4	9	7	28	23	25	196	45
United Kingdom	0.1	15.2	4.2	13	30	1	10	3	1
United States	9.1	13.9	6.2	5	41	413		3	6



Feeding Opportunity with Good Nutrition

In Canada, high national wealth does not ensure that every child has enough healthy food. Children have the highest average rate of food insecurity of any age group in Canada. While 24.3 per cent of children in Canada's provinces were food-insecure in 2022 (compared to 18.4 per cent of the general population), the rate was 32.4 per cent in the territories. The percentage of children living in food-insecure households was highest in P.E.I., where over one third of children (35.1 per cent) are affected by some level of food insecurity, and lowest in Quebec (21.3 per cent) (see figure 8). Almost 1.8 million children (one in four) were deprived of food security in 2022 compared to 1.4 million in 2021, co-occurring with the rise child poverty (Caron and Plunkett-Latimer, 2022).

Figure 8: Food insecurity rose in Canada and in every Canadian province in 2021

HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY STATUS*				
Geographic Area	Percentage of Children Under 18 Years			
	2018	2019	2020	2021
Canada**	22.2%	20.0%	19.6%	24.3%
Newfoundland and Labrador	26.6%	25.9%	26.4%	28.8%
Prince Edward Island	24.5%	25.8%	25.4%	35.1%
Nova Scotia	28.2%	25.0%	25.8%	31.4%
New Brunswick	25.7%	20.9%	24.2%	29.4%
Quebec	20.3%	12.8%	15.7%	21.3
Ontario	22.4%	22.8%	20.6%	24.6%
Manitoba	25.2%	24.6%	20.9%	25.7%
Saskatchewan	22.4%	20.6%	22.5%	26.1%
Alberta	24.3%	21.0%	21.7%	27.2%
British Columbia	19.0%	19.3%	16.9%	21.8%

■ **Data Quality: Very Good**
■ **Data Quality: Good**
■ **Data Quality: Acceptable**

* Includes marginal, moderate and severe food insecurity.

** Estimates for Canada do not include the territories.

Source: Canadian Income Survey (CIS) 2018–2021. Data on food insecurity for CIS are collected in the year following the survey reference year.: [Statistics Canada Table 13-10-0835-01](#)

The increase in children's food insecurity was predictable with the rise in food price inflation and child poverty, and it may presage a trend. Food price inflation climbed to almost 10 per cent in late 2022 – the highest pace of food price increase in more than 40 years – and reached 9 per cent in 2023. Visits to Canadian food banks rose to a record high in March 2022 with about 1.5 million visits that month (CBC, 2022a), and one forecast projected a 60 per cent increase in food bank and other food assistance program utilization between 2022 and 2023 (CBC, 2023). One study found that more than 30 per cent of Canadians were eating less healthy food because of inflation, and many were skipping meals because they could not afford to eat (CBC, 2022b).

The impacts of food insecurity on children are immediate, affect many aspects of well-being and are perpetuated across the life course (Young and Ramakrishnan, 2023). Overweight and obesity are associated with a poor diet, so it is not surprising that children in Canada have among the highest rates of overweight among high-income countries: close to one in three children (31 per cent). Only 10 of 43 rich countries have higher rates. Poor nutrition during pregnancy can predispose a fetus to type 2 diabetes or coronary heart disease later in life (Langley-Evans, 2020). In addition to poorer physical health, children living with food insecurity are 75 per cent more likely to visit hospitals and twice as likely to access health care for mental health or substance use disorders than those who have an appropriate diet (Anderson et al., 2023).

Young children who experience food insecurity are at a high risk of poor cognitive skill development in the early years, creating a learning gap starting early in life (Jackowitz, Morrissey and Brannegan, 2015). Studies have found a link between maternal nutrition quality and neurodevelopment, particularly cognitive development (Borge et al., 2017). Iron deficiency is widespread in infants and young children, and children with iron-deficiency anemia (IDA) have a higher risk of poor cognitive, motor, social-emotional and neurophysiological development (Hermoso et al., 2011; Lozoff, 2007). IDA can affect infant growth (Dallman, 1982), and toddlers with IDA can have motor function limitations that extend beyond childhood (Lozoff et al.,

2006). Other studies point to the risk of behavioural issues arising in children suffering an iron deficiency (McCann and Ames, 2007).

Food insecurity has been linked to weaker school performance in both academic achievement and relationship formation (Perez-Escamilla and de Toledo, 2012). Research points to effects on behaviour and emotional coping, decreasing children's capacity to be engaged in school (Ashiabi and O'Neal, 2008). Children from food-insecure households have an increased risk of hyperactivity and are less likely to get along with their classmates (Alaimo, Olson and Frongillo, 2001). The effect on education can be substantial, extend across all levels of schooling and, some suggest, across the life course (Faught et al., 2017; Jyoti, Frongillo and Jones, 2005).

There is no single solution to improve the food security of children, but there are key policy responses. The adequacy and inclusivity of the CCB is a fundamental policy measure, since household income is a robust predictor of food insecurity (Tarasuk et al., 2021). Another important policy to support child health and learning is a universal school meal program (dos Santos et al., 2022; Cohen et al., 2021; Alberta Health Services, 2021).



U-REPORT: 60 per cent of U-Reporters said they have been affected by a rise in food prices. Half of respondents said it's hard for them to get healthy, affordable food (November 2022). Eight in 10 U-Reporters said students at their school would benefit from having a school meal program (October 2022).



Building Adequate Housing for Children

What is a healthy housing market? Is it a market in which prices are rising and wealth is accumulating for some, or one in which every child can be housed in a quality dwelling and safe neighbourhood? The latter is what matters to the well-being of children and should be the primary goal of policymakers. Measuring it is not conducive to international comparison due to the variety of approaches in high-income countries, but Canada’s indicators of adequate housing for children are cause for concern.

Like the trend in child income poverty, the tentative improvement in housing conditions that began in 2017 has made a U-turn. The percentage of poor children living in unsuitable, overcrowded housing declined from 32 per cent in 2017 to 29.8 per cent in 2018. However, the trend direction then shifted, and by 2021 the rate rose to 34.1 per cent compared to 17.5 per cent for children in Canada who are not considered poor. In 2021, 6.4 per cent of children lived in housing in need of substantial repairs, such as having a poor foundation or leaking roof (Statistics Canada custom data request).

Children living in poverty in Canada are also more likely to live in households that spend more than 30 per cent of their income on shelter and are more likely to reside in subsidized rented dwellings (Randle, Thurston and Kubwimana, 2022). Living in subsidized housing is not a guarantee of housing adequacy. In 2016, 14.6 per cent of children in Canada lived in subsidized rented housing that needed major repairs compared to 10.2 per cent living in

non-subsidized rental dwellings requiring such repairs. On the other hand, children in non-subsidized rental housing were more likely to be in need of core housing than children in subsidized rental housing.

A deep body of research concludes that the quality and affordability of housing has a significant impact on child health and development (Waterston et al., 2015). While the old adage says, “Home is where the heart is”, research tells us that home is where the brain develops. Living in core housing need can increase children’s exposure to environmental hazards, which disproportionately affect developing brains and bodies (Waterston et al., 2015). Inadequate housing also carries the risk of increased exposure to communicable disease (Sturge, 2014). Poor air quality increases the risk of asthma, and lead exposure creates many developmental risks. One study found that more than half of the children coming to emergency departments or requiring hospital admission lived in housing need situations (Waterston et. al., 2015).

Canadian research found that low-quality housing can contribute to lower reading scores, emotional problems and problematic behaviours (Gagné and Ferrer, 2006). Other national and international investigations point to the effects of housing need on academic achievement. For instance, in overcrowded housing, children often lack a suitable place to study or complete homework (Toczydlowska, 2016). Housing instability – a risk highly correlated with housing need – contributes to poor academic performance, weak social networks and negative relations with teachers and others (Toczydlowska, 2016; Waterston et al., 2015).



Defining Housing Conditions for Children in Canada

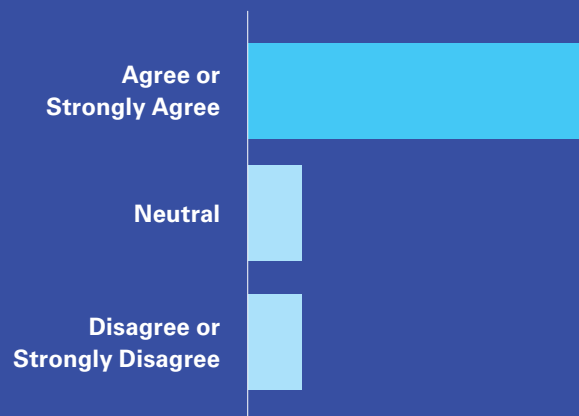
Inadequate housing	In need of major repairs
Unsuitable housing (crowded)	Fails to meet the National Occupancy Standard requirements for number of bedrooms for the size and make-up of the household
Unaffordable housing	30 per cent or more of gross household income spent on shelter
Unacceptable housing	Does not meet at least one of the standards of adequacy, suitability and affordability
Core housing need	Unacceptable housing and household would have to spend 30 per cent or more of their gross income to access acceptable housing in their community

(Randle, Thurston and Kubwimana, 2022)



U-REPORT: 76 per cent of U-Reporters said that the higher cost of living affected their mental health (March 2023).

“Increased cost of living has affected my mental health.”



The consequences of inadequate housing on children's mental health are also substantial. Children in core housing need are at increased risk of anxiety, depression, mood disorders, attention problems, aggression, low self-esteem and feelings of helplessness (Waterston et al., 2015). Overall, both boys and girls fare worse in housing that requires major repair, but boys are more negatively influenced by housing instability and girls by poor neighbourhood quality. First Nations children living on reserve and Inuit children in the North are far more likely than the average child to live in inadequate housing.

Policy measures to assure every child their right to adequate housing are multiple and contextual – and inadequate. Alleviating child poverty is a key policy measure. Even a policy tool as simple as a housing subsidy can have a demonstrable effect on the behaviour of boys living in poverty (Gagné and Ferrer, 2006).



Creating Healthy Digital Connections

Counting children's hours of screen time has almost become a national pastime in Canada. The developmental threat of screen time that is 'too much, too young' must be balanced with the risk of 'too little' (Ponti, 2022; Ponti, 2019). The focus of concern has broadened from the amount of time on screen to how children use screen time, and the responsibilities of governments and businesses to provide equitable access to a protected and respectful online environment for children. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the internet was quickly recognized as an indispensable medium for schooling and socialization. Increasingly, access to the internet is considered a basic need, if not a right.

A relatively high percentage of households in Canada have internet access, but this does not mean that every child has the access they need for information, education and participation in society. On average, 1.2 per cent of children did not have a computer at

home in 2018 (OECD, 2023). In 2020, 3.3 per cent of children in Canada reported a lack of internet connection at home, as their reliance on it increased during the pandemic (OECD, 2023). Having a computer and internet connection at home are rudimentary indicators of access. With school closures during the pandemic, access to necessary equipment and a sufficient internet connection were exposed as universally necessary but also as significant gaps for many children. Even if a household has sufficient equipment and internet access, children may not have ready access to them.

In Alberta, at least one in 10 schoolchildren lacked adequate access to online learning due to digital exclusion (CBC, 2020). One Canadian survey in the early days of the pandemic found that 3 in 10 households anticipated challenges with online schooling due to inadequate digital connections, a finding that provides a meaningful glimpse into digital inequality (Environics, Future Skills Centre and Diversity Institute, 2021). Approximately one third of respondents reported that their children would need to use public wi-fi due to the lack of a reliable internet connection at home.



Towards a Child-Centred Digital Equality Framework

Digital inclusion refers to a child's opportunity and ability to engage with digital systems (or choose not to engage with them) in ways that allow them to obtain beneficial outcomes across all domains of everyday life and avoid negative outcomes for themselves and others now and in the future.

Digital equality refers to a situation in which a child's digital inclusion is not dependent on where they are from or what their background is; where the inequalities in their life are addressed so that they can seize digital opportunities and avoid risks.

A similar proportion reported that their children would be unlikely to complete their schoolwork due to the lack of a computer at home. In Ontario, many local school boards provided families in need with free devices and data plans to address the digital gap. The Toronto District School Board distributed approximately 30,000 devices to low-income families, while the Peel District School Board provided almost 20,000 devices and 2,000 internet sticks (CTV News, 2020a; CTV News, 2020b).

The digital divide has a socio-economic skew: 39 per cent of the lower-income bracket surveyed by Environics reported a lack of reliable in-home internet compared to 18

per cent of the higher income group. The digital divide was even stronger for racialized groups and Indigenous Peoples: 41 per cent of racialized respondents lacked reliable internet connection at home compared to 21 per cent on non-racialized respondents, and 48 per cent of Indigenous respondents compared to 28 per cent of non-Indigenous respondents. Low-income (35 per cent), racialized (39 per cent) and Indigenous (55 per cent) households indicated that a smartphone would have to be used to complete school homework compared to high-income (23 per cent), non-racialized (22 per cent) and non-Indigenous (28 per cent) households.

Technology must always be situated in a social context. A child's socio-economic position and environment can have a powerful effect on technology access and use. Not only can digital equality narrow the socio-economic digital divide, it can mediate a range of social divisions and become an instrument of digital and social inclusion (Katz, Gonzalez and Clark, 2017). One study found that closing the digital divide could help low-income, racialized and immigrant children develop self-efficacy in math and science while learning to fully participate in groups (Clark, 2005). To enable a world in which children are connected to people, knowledge and skills, it is essential to promote digital equality, facilitate digital inclusion, and protect and respect children's rights in digital environments. Adopting Bill C-27, the *Digital Charter Implementation Act*, is an opportunity for the Parliament of Canada to advance children's digital rights and equity.



Opening the Door to Opportunity through Education

Income transfers that directly subsidize families with children are the main policy lever for transforming conditions of poverty to opportunity. However, not everything children need and have the right to can be purchased privately. Food, housing and digital participation rely on a combination of adequate income and equity-advancing public policies. Since the post-war period, countries have also developed free, universal public goods and services to provide material security and opportunity, most notably public education. Access to education has long been viewed as a developer and 'great leveler' of opportunity. Universal public programs of quality education have the power to bring children together across socio-economic and other lines of stratification.

Previous UNICEF Report Cards have documented Canada's relatively high rankings on most measures of public education outcomes, including children's achievement in international tests at age 15 (e.g., OECD Programme for International Student Assessment). Not only has Canada ranked at the top in learning achievement, it has been a leader in the equity of educational outcomes, outperforming countries such as Norway, Sweden and Denmark. While significant equity gaps remain between children in Canada's schools – particularly for Indigenous, Black and other racialized children and disabled children – public education can help level the playing field in Canada.

In fact, although Canada's lagging system of early child learning and care has also been well-documented in UNICEF reports comparing high-income countries, Canada's systems of public elementary and secondary education effectively narrow the wide gaps in early child development that children have when they start school (UNICEF Canada, 2018). The leveling effect of public education in relation to poverty and social position helps explain why Canada is a more socially mobile society than countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States.

Canada's high school achievement scores and graduation rates are based on those who go to school, but a substantial proportion of children are not enrolled in school, even predating relatively prolonged pandemic school disruptions in much of Canada. In 2018, 13.7 per cent of 15-year-olds were not enrolled in school. Only 12 of 43 wealthy countries had lower enrollment rates. Minimal national data measures 'hidden exclusion' – the students who 'check out' (i.e., do not regularly attend class or participate), drop out or are repeatedly suspended. In 2019, 23.2 per cent of 15-year-old students in Canada reported having skipped a day of school in the previous two weeks, slightly more than the OECD average of 22 per cent (OECD, 2023). Chronic absenteeism is highly related to child poverty and its related conditions (including food insecurity, and poor health and housing conditions). Frequent missed school days (10 per cent or more per year) are a significant risk factor for dropout and other negative academic outcomes

(Temkin et al., 2023). The dropout rate among Canada's students is estimated at between 5 and 14 per cent, reaching as high as 50 per cent in low-income communities (Pathways to Education, 2019). Research has found that Black students in southern Ontario were twice as likely as white students to be suspended and four times as likely to be expelled. Indigenous students were expelled at a rate over three times their representation in schools (James and Turner, 2017). This was not found to be primarily caused by differences in behaviours, but rather by differences in the way that students are treated and differences in the characteristics of the schools that Black and white students attend.

The absenteeism and disengagement of students, which expanded with pandemic school disruptions, could widen gaps in academic achievement, especially for low-income, Indigenous and racialized children and children with disabilities. Few provinces and territories have developed comprehensive recovery plans responding to the educational impact of the pandemic, and some are even reducing per-pupil funding.




U-REPORT: 52 per cent of U-Reporters said that the higher cost of living affected their ability to succeed in school (November 2022).



Child Health: A Sentinel of Child Poverty

Poverty shows up in a wide range of child health status measures beyond the health impacts of food insecurity. Vaccination rates are not as closely aligned with income levels as are rates of food security, but provision of parental leave is associated with higher likelihood a child will be vaccinated. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF, 79 per cent of children in Canada had received their second dose of measles vaccine (MCV2) in 2022. This is insufficient to provide community protection (the threshold is 95 per cent of the child population) and, therefore, creates an unacceptable risk of measles infection. Measles vaccination in Canada has declined steeply from the pre-pandemic rate of 87 per cent in 2019, and it has continued to fall since the height of pandemic disruptions in 2020 and 2021. Only 4 of 43 high-income countries had lower MCV2 vaccination coverage in 2021 (see figure 9). This underscores the need to redouble efforts to recover from the historic backsliding in immunization caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, but also to strengthen the reach of the health system to achieve Canada's goal of 95 per cent coverage, which had eluded us even before the pandemic.

Figure 9: Measles vaccination rates fell in some high-income countries from 2012 to 2021

	2012	2018	2021
France	72	83	86
Chile	74	93	58
Austria	78	84	88
Colombia	80	88	86
Canada 	83	87	83
Greece	83	83	83
Italy	84	89	86
New Zealand	85	90	82
Belgium	85	85	85
Finland	85	93	93
Türkiye	85	87	93
Luxembourg	86	90	90
Switzerland	86	90	94
United Kingdom	87	88	87
Denmark	87	90	94
Cyprus	88	88	88
Israel	89	96	93
Romania	90	81	75
Spain	90	94	91
Malta	91	95	93
Australia	91	93	94
United States	91	94	95
Norway	91	93	95
Latvia	92	94	85
Mexico	92	99	97
Japan	92	93	95
Lithuania	93	92	88
Germany	93	93	93
Netherlands	93	89	90
Estonia	94	88	84
Bulgaria	94	87	86
Costa Rica	95	93	69
Sweden	95	94	91
Poland	95	92	95
Slovenia	96	94	91
Portugal	96	96	95
Iceland	97	95	
Croatia	97	95	90
Rep. of Korea	97	97	96
Slovakia	99	97	96
Hungary	99	99	99
Czechia	99	84	90
Average	90	91	89

 **Rose**  **Fell**  **Maintained**



The Basics for All: Water and Sanitation

Canada has the third-largest reserve of freshwater in the world, covering almost 10 per cent of the country's surface, and about one quarter of the world's freshwater supply. Yet, comparing the world's richest countries in UNICEF Report Card 17, Canada ranked 23rd in child morbidity and 20th in child mortality due to unsafe water conditions. Although the absolute risk of water-related morbidity and mortality is relatively low, it is unacceptable in a rich country and particularly in a country with abundant freshwater.

Many Indigenous communities in Canada are deprived of clean, safe water due to long- and short-term drinking water advisories. Some of these advisories have persisted for decades, across generations of children. Despite progress following a federal political promise in 2015 to end all 142 long-term drinking water advisories in First Nations communities, 28 long-term drinking water advisories in 26 communities remain as of June 19, 2023 (Government of Canada, 2023). Harm to children has been extensively documented, from skin rashes to other illnesses and impairments. Unsafe water is typically amenable to resolution with the construction and maintenance of suitable water treatment infrastructure.

A study of local governments in Quebec discovered connections between the affluence of a municipality, water treatment and lead exposure (Delpla et al., 2015). Of low-income communities, 26 per cent did not apply water treatment and 51 per cent used only basic treatment, while 41 per cent of more affluent communities used advanced water treatments. The water in poorer communities was more likely to have high levels of lead, including higher tap water levels.

Canada introduced new environmental regulations with Bill S-5, amending the cornerstone *Canada Environmental Protection Act* in 2023. However, efforts to protect children's right to a clean and safe environment are far from complete.

Children Pay the Highest Price for Poverty

Children Pay the Highest Price for Poverty

Children pay the highest price when governments fail to protect them and their families from enduring market income inequalities and from financial shocks like recessions and inflation spikes. Children have one chance at childhood, the most sensitive stage of human development when deprivations like food insecurity and exposures like air pollution that are associated with poverty are particularly devastating and long-lasting. It is also when positive investments have amplified impacts on child well-being and the greatest economic returns.

Not surprisingly, children from low-income families are less likely to be 'happy' or, in statistical terms, satisfied with life (OECD, 2022). While the web of interactive factors leading to unhappiness is complex, most studies point towards material conditions and the social context of poverty as critical influences. Although money cannot buy happiness, Bradshaw (2015) found a robust correlation between children's life satisfaction and domains of material well-being including housing and environment, concluding that children are happier if they are not materially deprived.

Low income is linked to a range of poor child outcomes. Childhood poverty is a traumatic experience that often results in lifelong scarring. An ever-growing body of research emphasizes the critical importance of protecting children from poverty, especially in the early years when brain development is most elastic (Irwin, Siddiqi and Hertzman, 2007; Hertzman, 2006). The earlier and longer a child is materially deprived, the more likely is their impaired development, poorer health, lower school achievement, greater welfare dependency, and other consequences that are costly to individual children and to a country's economic and social well-being. Several high quality, systematic reviews (Zohra et al., 2022; Cooper and Stewart, 2013; Abu-Saad and Fraser, 2010; Phipps and Lethbridge, 2006; Phipps, 2003) have been conducted on the developmental effects of income, reaching these conclusions:

- Poorer children have worse cognitive, social-behavioural and health outcomes that are explained by the level of household income.
- Poverty is a major risk factor for low birth weight, preterm birth and poorer long-term health and development.
- Those who experience childhood poverty are at higher risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and death, and this elevated risk persists even if they experience improvements in life circumstances later.
- Children whose families struggle to meet their basic needs tend to experience higher rates of bullying, physical assault and other forms of violence, and weaker relationships with family, peers and teachers.
- Long-term poverty appears to have a stronger negative effect on child well-being than short-term exposures to low income.
- The timing of low-income exposure is important, with the strongest negative effects evident in the early years of life.
- Poverty experienced before the age of five is strongly associated with lower adult earnings and lower work hours.
- The impact can vary in relation to age and outcome: cognitive development is most affected in younger children, while behavioural outcomes are more relevant for adolescents.

The net impact of material deprivation is both immediate and persistent (OECD, 2022; Repetti, Taylor and Seeman, 2002; Brooks-Gunn, Duncan and Mariato, 1997). This underlines the importance of eliminating child poverty to improve outcomes for children and adults alike.

Children's Perceptions of Poverty and Exclusion

Children’s Perceptions of Poverty and Exclusion



What Do Canadian Children Say about the Cost of Living?

Canada has been experiencing a rate of inflation not seen in decades. Rarely do policymakers and survey firms talk to children about how they are experiencing economic volatility. With this in mind, UNICEF Canada asked U-Reporters about how the rising cost of living was affecting them (access at <https://canada-en.ureport.in/opinions/>).

Approximately 42 per cent of respondents ages 15 to 19 said that the higher cost of living was limiting how their basic needs were fulfilled. Over 60 per cent of adolescents felt such a degree of concern about inflation that it was affecting their mental health (with 31 per cent strongly agreeing and 33 per cent agreeing). For young adults ages 20 to 24, the percentage rocketed to 90 per cent. Younger children were less likely to say so. Research has found that parents typically protect their children from the impacts of poverty as much as possible – they will sacrifice their nutrition and other needs and opportunities before their children have to do so.

For many young people, the price of living in the present is uncertainty about their future. U-Reporters ages 15 to 19 reported that they are uncertain about making big decisions about their future careers (62 per cent) and plans for post-secondary education or training (61 per cent).

In the current economic environment, children and youth perceive a world of shrinking opportunity.

Although children are disproportionately affected by poverty, conceptualizations and measures of poverty rarely consider their perceptions or priorities. Children are not invited to participate in the discourses and decisions that shape the policies that should ultimately benefit them. Being ‘poor’ and being ‘children’, they are excluded twice.

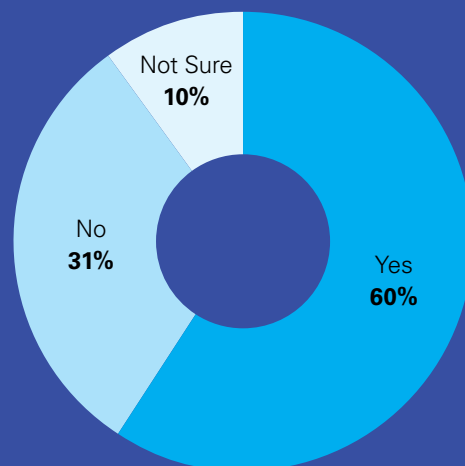
As U-Reporters in Canada tell us, children are often only too aware of the deprivation that comes with inadequate family income. Their experiences of poverty can be affected by how resources are shared within a household. For some, the impacts are softened by parents who go without nutrition or other needs, but few will escape the stress and stigma that living in poverty creates. Children in the same family can have different experiences based on their ages, genders and disabilities, and children of separated parents can have different experiences in each household.

Children’s perceptions of poverty are also conditioned by the conditions around them. Beyond an ability to meet basic needs, research has confirmed the relative nature of poverty based on social comparison. When children feel excluded from normal participation in society, deprived of the opportunities that other children around them have, they ‘feel’ poor.



U-REPORT: 60 per cent of U-Reporters said that the higher cost of living affected their ability to meet their basic needs (March 2023).

“Has higher cost of living affected your ability to meet your basic needs?”



UNICEF Canada convened young people ages 14 to 18 from Ontario, Alberta and Nova Scotia in a virtual focus group, to model a process for and to facilitate the expression of young people's views on accessing resources to meet their needs and to have "a good enough life".

Participants identified a hypothetical young person's needs and found images to represent those needs, and listed and discussed assets that currently exist for children and youth in their communities and those that are missing or need improvement (see figure 10). The participants shared their views verbally; in writing in the virtual chat; and by contributing text and images to a virtual Jam Board. They depicted social inclusion in both material and non-material dimensions, with attendant responsibilities for all levels of government. The participants emphasized the high costs of material deprivation for individuals (i.e., purchasing bottled water when clean tap water is inaccessible) and the benefits of preventing harms and costs by meeting their material needs (e.g., safe housing and adequate clothing).

"Even for the limited amount of time I had to [drink filtered water], it was a really big struggle so I can't imagine families that don't have access to clean water from taps, what they go through."

"Even pursuing your interests; so money to buy books... maybe even like art supplies or anything that you're interested in, that's really important as well."

"Not only should it [home] be safe, but a little bit comfy too....it should be a comfortable place to sleep."

"I think it's important to have access to all of the different food groups, because it's important for your nutrition. So for instance if someone's a vegetarian they should still be able to have access to non-meat or vegan sources of protein."

"If [you] have work, it'd be nice to have clothes that are appropriate for work. Or even like having pajamas too, for at home. Definitely different types of clothing for different events."

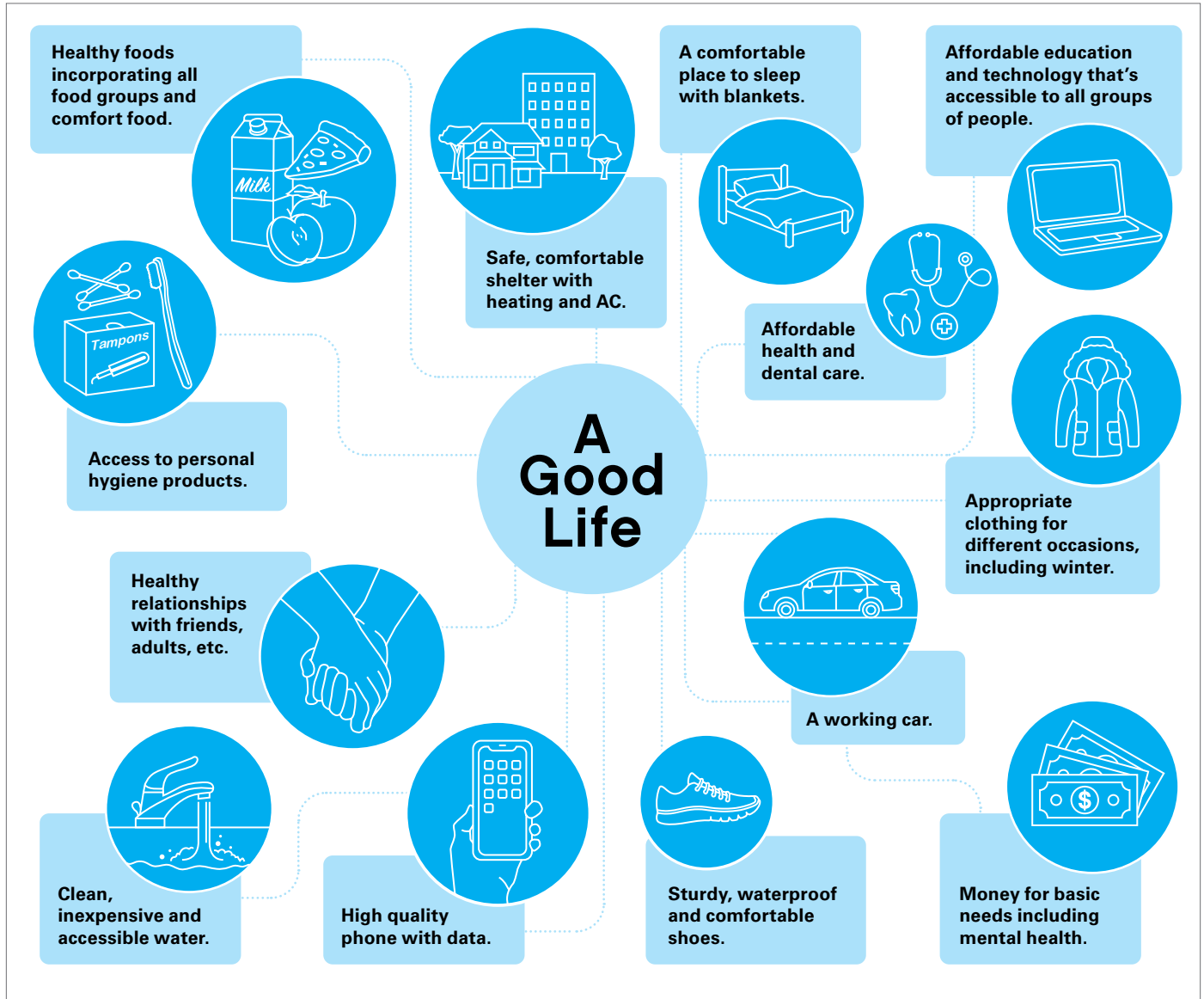
"Snacks, like chips and candy.... while it's not healthy, we all love it and it's comfort food as well."

"Something that me and my friends have constant worries about is paying for tuition...it's a constant stress on students."

"I'm not such an active person...I wish there were sports that were free to join and learn. Because in the rec centre you have to pay for it or you have to get a membership, and it just seems like another reason why I shouldn't join a sport."

UNICEF Canada's consultation with young people produced a list of items that characterize their definition of poverty and social exclusion, in both material and non-material dimensions.

Figure 10: Children's material needs for "a good life"





Uplifting Children from Poverty by Upholding their Rights

Uplifting Children from Poverty by Upholding their Rights

To fulfil the Convention on the Rights of the Child, governments have responsibilities to protect children’s vulnerable early years from economic conditions over which they have no control. Children’s right to an adequate standard of living is an entitlement to more than poverty alleviation or material welfare: it is to a level of income sufficient for their optimal, holistic development and consistent with respect for their human dignity. Children’s right to benefit from social protection is a foundation to enable them to realize their

other rights – to nutrition, to protection and, more than that, to develop to their potential and fully participate in the life of the society into which they are born.

Leaving children out of social protection with inadequate benefit levels or administrative exclusions means falling short of human rights standards. In May 2022, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child reviewed how well Canada is fulfilling children’s rights and recommended priorities for progress (United Nations, 2022). As in past reviews, the UN Committee called on Canada to reach its goal to eliminate child poverty. It reminded Canada that every child is entitled to adequate financial support and accessible services without discrimination, noting the wide inequalities experienced by Indigenous and Black children and children with disabilities.



The United Nations Human Rights Framework for Child Social Protection

<p>UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (articles 26 and 27)</p>	<p>The right to benefit from social security, including social insurance, and shall take the necessary measures to achieve the full realization of this right in accordance with their national law.</p> <p>The right to a standard of living adequate for the child’s physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.</p>
<p>Universal Declaration of Human Rights (articles 22 and 25)</p>	<p>The right to social security, taking into consideration the resources and circumstances of the child and persons having responsibility for their maintenance.</p> <p>The right to a standard of living adequate for their health and well-being; and the right to special care and assistance.</p>
<p>International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (articles 9, 10 and 11)</p>	<p>The right to the widest possible protection and assistance to the family, particularly for the care of dependent children.</p> <p>The right to the special protection of mothers before and after childbirth; adequate pay or social security for working mothers during this period.</p>
<p>International Labour Organization Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention (No. 102, Part VII)</p>	<p>Provides for family and maternity benefits, the cost of which is mainly the responsibility of the State.</p> <p>Sets minimum standards for the provision of child benefits in cash or in kind, or a combination, allocated for the maintenance of the child; the fundamental objective of family benefits should be to ensure the well-being of children and the economic stability of their families.</p> <p>Family benefits are required to be granted to every child and set at a level that relates to the actual cost of providing for a child and adjusted for changes in this cost or the general cost of living.</p> <p>Family allowances should be universal; benefits above a minimum rate may be subject to a means test.</p>
<p>International Labour Organization Recommendation No. 202</p>	<p>Income security for children is one of the basic social security guarantees constituting a national social protection floor.</p> <p>Income security for children should ensure access to nutrition, education, care and any other necessary goods and services such as may be set out in national poverty lines, with a minimum level to allow for a life of dignity.</p> <p>The basic social security guarantee should apply to at least all residents and all children.</p>

MOVING UP THE FAIRNESS SCALE:

Inclusive Policies for Children's Social Protection

Moving Up the Fairness Scale: Inclusive Policies for Children’s Social Protection

When we talk about child poverty, are we all talking about the same thing? For some, the focus is on the ‘poverty level’ – some set of material conditions considered sufficient to meet children’s minimum basic needs such as food and shelter. Canada’s poverty yardsticks and policies are calibrated to, but do not even fulfil, this low level of ambition. This is clearly indicated by the rate of food insecurity among children. Household food insecurity is a key indicator in the Government of Canada’s Official Poverty Dashboard. In 2022, 24.3 per cent of children under 18 lived in households that experienced food insecurity – more than triple the rate of child poverty according to the MBM (6.4 per cent). The rate of infant mortality is also a fundamental indicator of material security and the broader well-being of children. In 2020, only 6 of 38 OECD countries had an infant mortality rate higher than Canada’s 4.5 per thousand births (OECD 2023). Nine of 43 high-income countries had a higher rate of under-five mortality than Canada in 2021, but with the exception of the United States, all are in Eastern Europe and Latin America.



“As we embark upon this great collective journey, we pledge that no one will be left behind.”

– UN Declaration on Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 70/1, 2015

Is reaching the ‘poverty level’ a sufficient ambition for children in the world’s richest countries?

Poverty reduction strategies can aim to ‘make life a bit better’ or to spread ‘opportunity for all’ more widely. The poverty level has been described as ‘social starvation’ and a ‘famine of opportunity’. UNICEF’s social protection framework is rights-based and aligned with the ‘opportunity level’: It calls for sufficient household income to enable families not only to meet children’s basic needs but to support their optimal development and fulsome participation in the societies into which they are born (UNICEF, 2019). The National Advisory Council on Poverty recommended in 2022 that the Government of Canada work with provinces and territories to establish an income floor above Canada’s official poverty line by 2030 (NCAP, 2022).



Framing the Level of Child Poverty

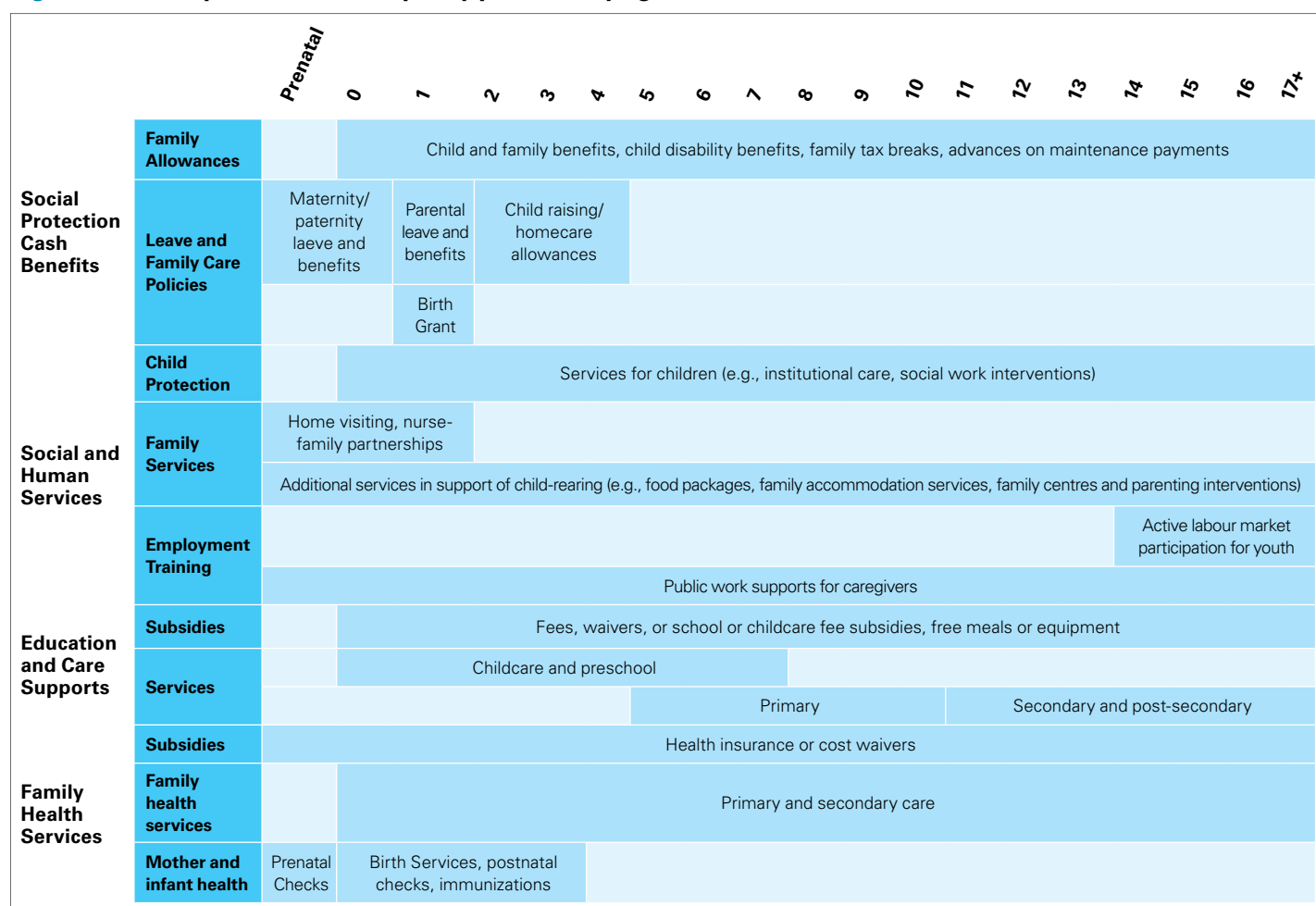
	Poverty Level	Opportunity Level
Opportunity Level	The right to survival and basic comfort	The right to fully develop and utilize capabilities
Temporal Perspective	Present conditions	Future outcomes
Policy Approach	Residual resources	Equitable resources
Policy Measure	Fixed, absolute standards of resources	Dynamic, relative standards of resources
Policy Output	Remedy disadvantage	Level the playing field

In wealthy countries, the well-being of children is a sentinel of the adequacy and inclusion of social protection policies. Comprehensive social protection systems are essential to protect their well-being. Neglecting to ensure children have sufficient social protection is akin to allowing the green shoots of human development to wither rather than flourish. Child income benefits can mean the difference between a healthy, happy life and one punctuated by poor mental and physical health and unrealized potential. These benefits play a particularly critical role during the earliest years of a child’s development when young minds and bodies are forming and developing.

The overwhelming evidence suggests that high-income countries should double down on social protection for children to buffer them from poverty, share opportunity

equitably and achieve the best child outcomes and economic returns. UNICEF, the OECD, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund agree that governments that are most successful in protecting children from poverty provide adequate and inclusive income support, primarily through cash transfers and parental leave, as well as universal public services including quality childcare and school meals (see figure 11). With this recognition, in 2022 the EU established the European Child Guarantee, which aims to prevent and combat child poverty and social exclusion. Italy, Lithuania, Montenegro and Poland expanded their child income benefits to all children, and many EU nations are advancing other already well-established policies, such as childcare and parental leave, to be more adequate and inclusive.

Figure 11: A comprehensive child policy portfolio by age



Source: Adapted from Richardson (2015), OECD, 2009 and 2011.

Social protection policies for children have gained significant traction in Canada since UNICEF's last Report Card on child poverty. Key milestones include:



See Appendix B for a more detailed list

But the social protection of children can't be checked off Canada's policy to-do list.



A Better Canada Child Benefit

The effectiveness of social protection is measured in its ability to reach children (coverage) and the level of support it provides to them (adequacy), as well as the resulting level of child poverty. While Canada has made substantial progress to reduce child poverty, the CCB still leaves out too many children and leaves too many in poverty. This is evidenced by Canada's rate of child poverty in this Report Card: 17.8 per cent, close to 1 million children, remain in poverty seven years after the CCB was introduced. The recent increase in child poverty is also a strong indication of insufficient investment in income benefits for children, as are high rates of food insecurity and infant mortality (UNICEF and ILO, 2023).

Income benefit coverage and access

Every high-income country provides a cash benefit for children and families anchored in national law. Most high-income countries provide universal income benefit coverage of children. Canada's coverage is theoretically near-universal: 95 per cent of children under age 15 are entitled to a child or family benefit (see figure 12).⁴ But income benefits for children must be inclusive and accessible in practice.

However, some children are administratively excluded from accessing the CCB. Section 122.6(e) of the *Income Tax Act* unfairly ties a child's eligibility to the immigration status of their parents. Children of parents without Canadian citizenship or permanent resident status are not eligible for the CCB, even if the parent is considered a resident for income tax purposes and is paying into the tax system and even if the child was born in Canada.

Other children are de facto excluded from accessing the CCB. Children in kinship care, customary care and informal foster care face barriers to proving they meet eligibility requirements, including limitations on who can attest to residency and difficulty accessing the required documentation.

Filing a personal tax return is conditional to access many government benefits, including the CCB (and in turn, some provincial and territorial child income benefits), and to provide proof of eligibility for childcare and housing subsidies. However, an estimated 10 per cent of people with children, particularly those with low incomes, do not file taxes, resulting in a loss of \$1,500 to \$3,000 in benefits annually for a family with children and around \$1 billion total (Robson and Schwartz, 2020). According to the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA), the perceived complexity of filing an income tax return is one of the most common challenges faced by people who do not do it. Free, automatic tax filing, which is available in several other countries, would go a long way to ensuring that those who need government benefits the most are able to access them. The federal government pledged to begin implementing automatic tax filing in the 2023 federal budget.

⁴ Eleven report card countries have universal income transfers for children (covering all families to at least some extent), while 18 including Canada have means-tested transfers.

Income benefit adequacy

The adequacy of Canada's social protection also has gaps. Access to child income benefits should not only be easier, it should be fairer. For a single parent with two children, social protection covers 36 per cent of an average wage and for an out-of-work couple with two children it covers 37 per cent (see figure 13). As a result, the rate of poverty for children in lone parent families is 44.1 per cent while the rich-country average is 32.2 per cent, yielding Canada a rank of 32nd among 38 countries (see figure 14). In nine countries including Canada, a child in a lone parent family is more than five times as likely to live in poverty as other children. Six of those countries are in the top third of the league table, revealing wide inequalities within them. The top-performing countries cover more than 50 per cent of the average wage – still a considerable gap to an adequate standard of living for children. Canada provides about half of this income support in family benefits (18 per cent) and half in social assistance, while most countries rely much more on social assistance, which tends to have more barriers and more stigma. In contrast, Australia and Ireland provide the entirety of their coverage as family benefits. The adequacy of Canada's social transfers to out-of-work families worsened slightly over the past decade while adequacy improved in 13 of 39 countries (see figure 15).

Towards closing adequacy gaps, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives 2023 Alternative Federal Budget proposed the non-taxable 'Canada Child Benefit End of Poverty Supplement' (CCB-EndPov) (CCPA, 2023). This supplement would provide an additional \$8,500 per year (for the first child) to families with an earned income of less than \$19,000. Additional amounts would be provided for multiple children, and the supplement would be reduced at a rate of \$0.50 for every additional dollar of income. This supplement is calculated to have a dramatic effect on child poverty, with the potential to cut it by about half to 3.6 per cent according to the MBM.

Investing in more adequate income benefits for the lowest income families, by all levels of government in Canada, would be consistent with global evidence about how to support children and families. Research clearly shows that better social protection (particularly an adequate cash transfer) can reduce poverty and improve food security, health and education outcomes (UNICEF, 2023). Canadian research has found that the current CCB has not been adequate enough to reduce overall food insecurity among children but has reduced the incidence of severe food insecurity among low-income families (Tarasuk, V., 2023). Research has also found that increasing benefit income is associated with improvement in children's math scores, reduction in the likelihood of having a diagnosis of a learning disability and improvements in maternal depression (Milligan and Stabile, 2011). Lowering the benefit phase-out rate has had positive effects on child behaviour, school engagement, maternal depression and domestic abuse (Gennetian and Miller, 2002). Cooper and Stewart (2013) calculated that income increases had effect sizes on child outcomes comparable to those identified for remedial program spending on early childhood education. The finding echoes other research estimating the impact of sufficient income on child well-being (Duncan, Morris and Rodrigues 2011; Taylor, Dearing and McCartney, 2004; Berger, Paxson and Waldfogel, 2009).

Additionally, CRA policies related to CCB payment reductions should be reconsidered from a child-sensitive lens. Child income benefits may be deeply cut for families that owe a balance to the CRA due to previous CCB overpayment. Although child benefits are not clawed back to pay other kinds of income tax-related debt, some recipients of pandemic benefits had their child benefits reduced if these emergency benefits temporarily increased their incomes. The Parliamentary Budget Office reported that child benefit payments were reduced for 1.67 million recipients in 2021/22 because taxable pandemic benefits were counted in income calculations (Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer of Canada, 2022). It projected that as a result, over three years, the federal government will spend \$1.45 billion less in child benefit payments. The reductions will disproportionately affect lower-income families and children. As Campaign 2000 has advocated, temporary emergency benefits should not be calculated as income for the purpose of CCB eligibility, parallel to the protection of the Guaranteed Income Supplement for seniors. Furthermore, children in low-income families should not be substantially deprived of CCB payments due to balances their parents owe to the CRA.

Figure 12: Coverage of children by social protection, 2020

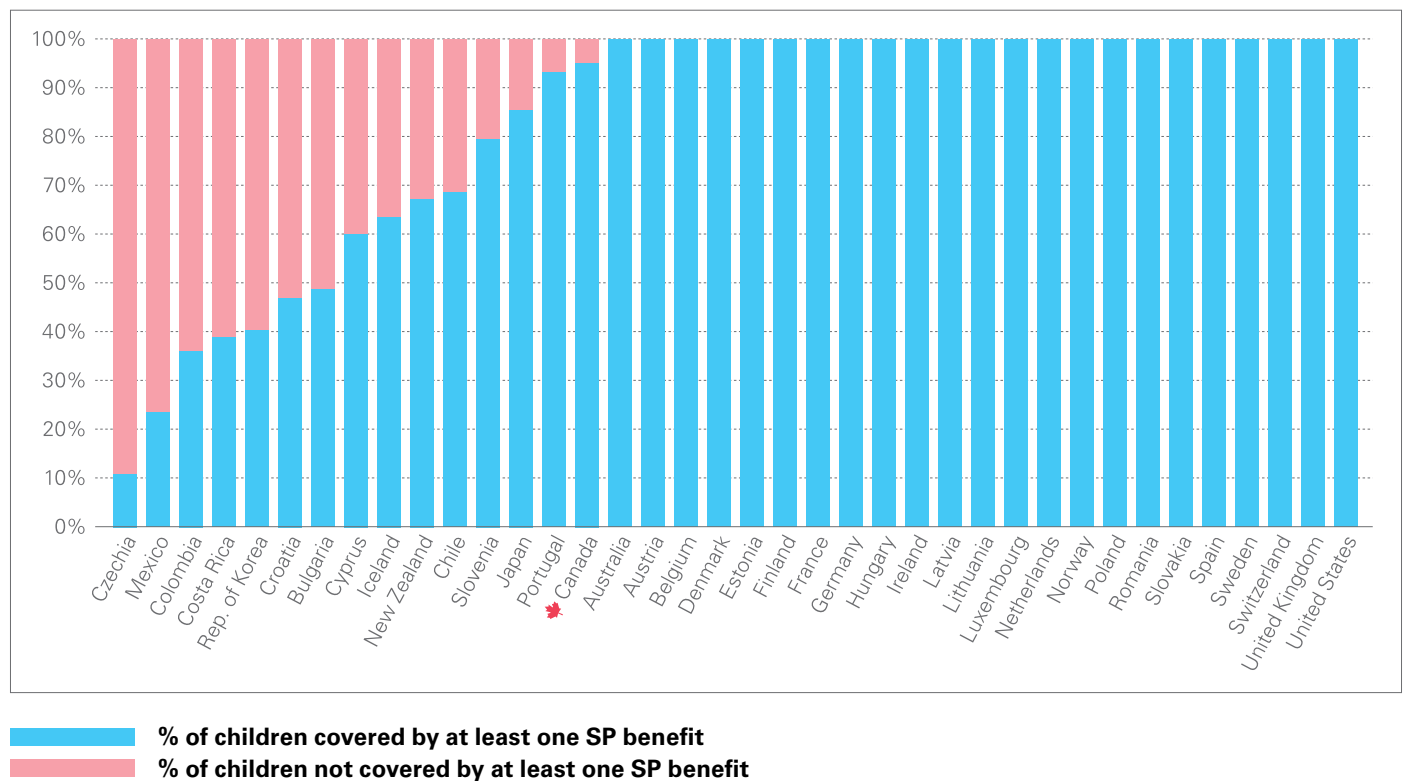


Figure 13: Adequacy of social protection for children, 2022

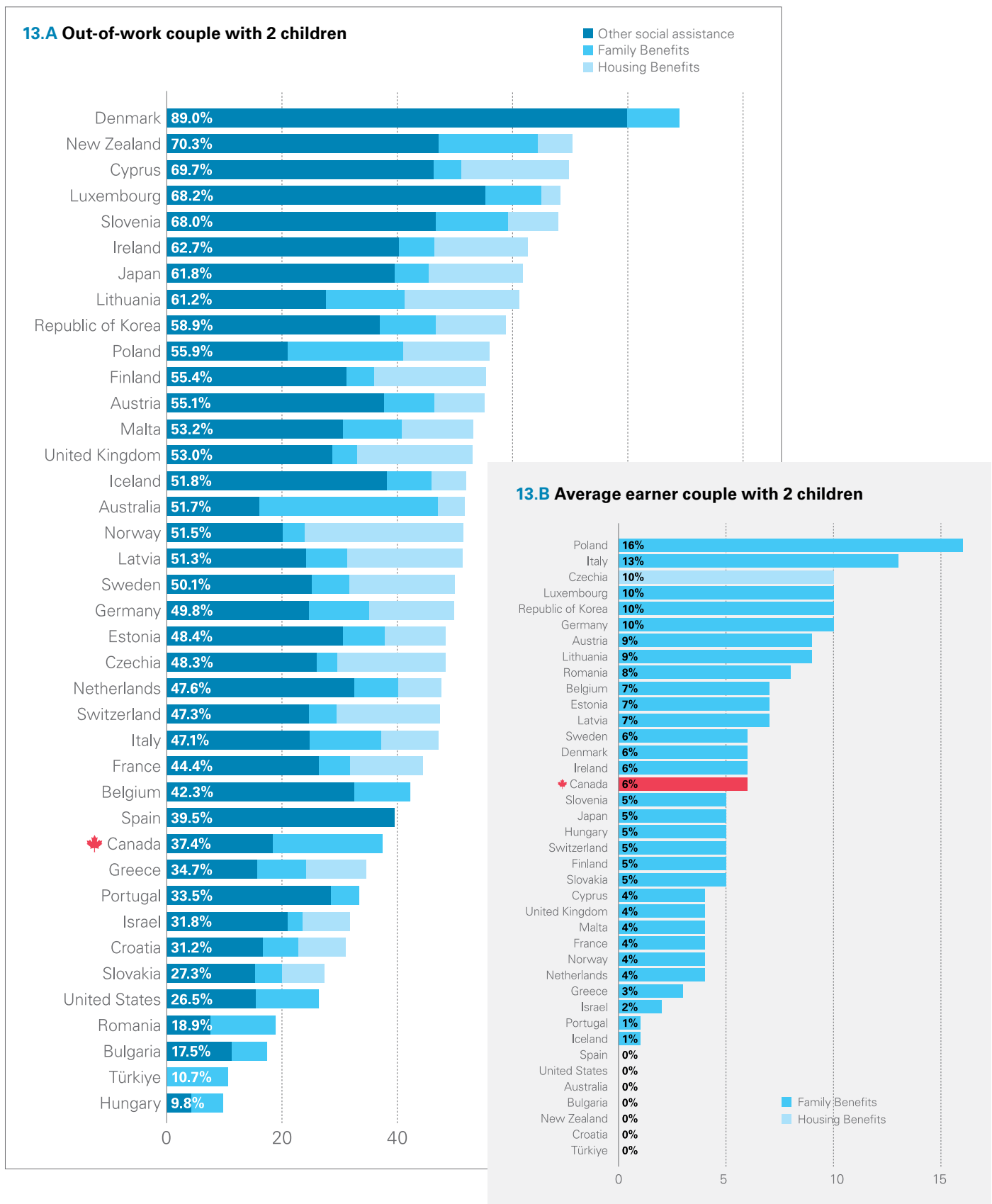


Figure 14: Child poverty by household type, 2018 or most recent

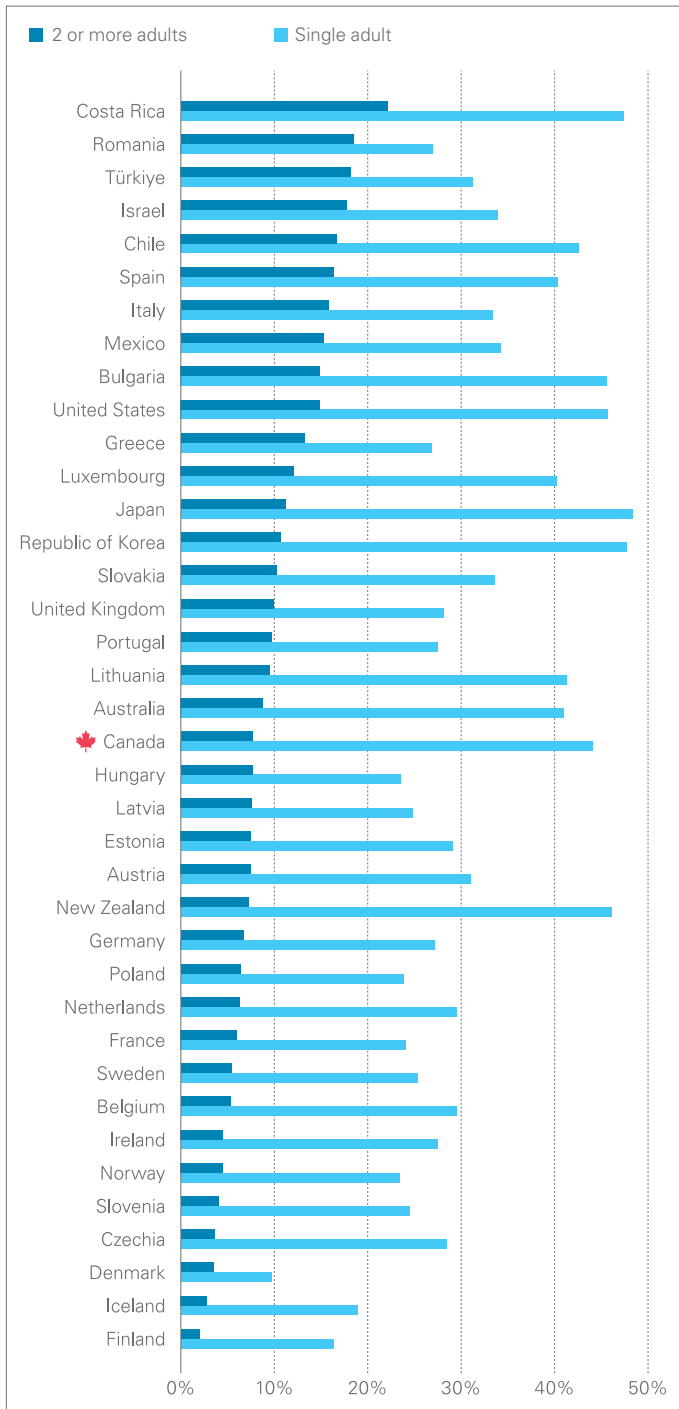
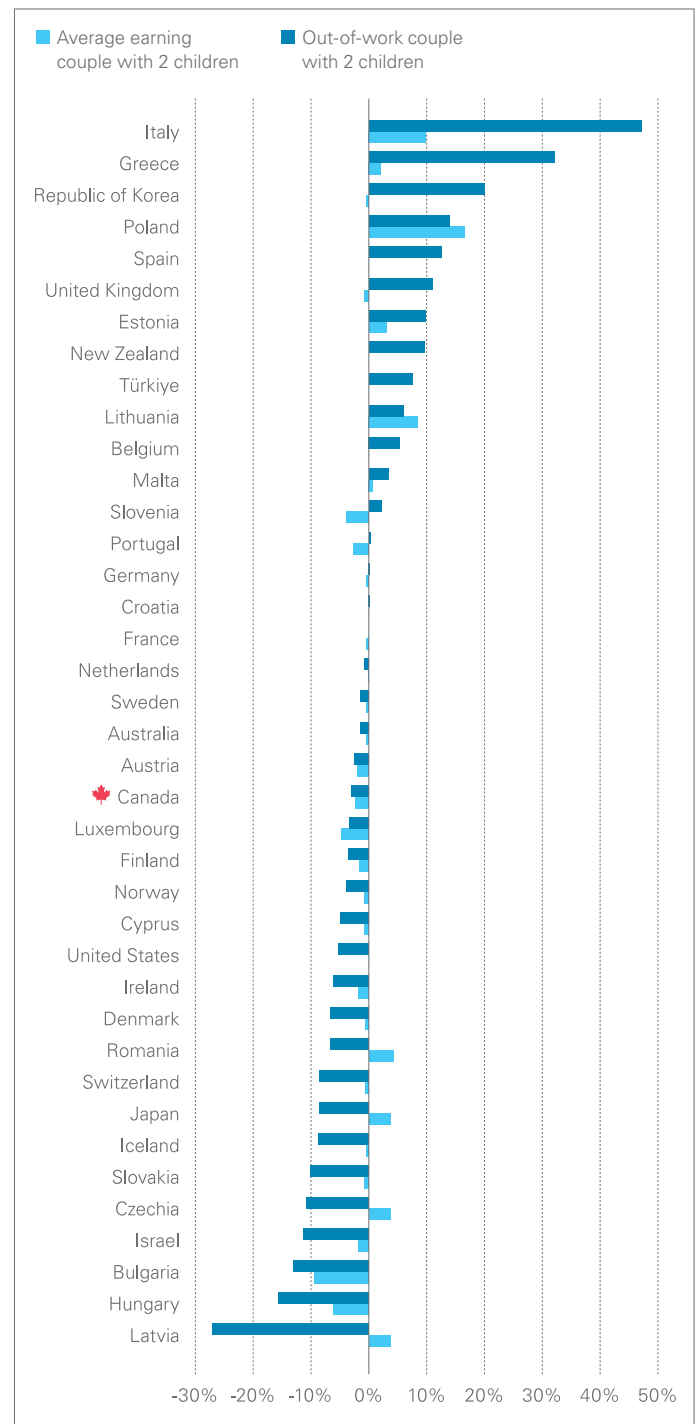


Figure 15: Absolute change in the adequacy of social transfers for children (family benefits and social assistance), 2012–2022





Parental Leave That Does Not Leave Infants Out

Parental leave remains the most overlooked gap in Canada's family-friendly policy portfolio. One third of infants is excluded from paid time with a parent (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2023). Canada invests less in paid parental leave than the OECD country average, and the pay of those who can access it is inadequate compared to international standards and norms as well as the income needed to get infants off to the best start. Canada's parental leave is a regressive policy with the greatest benefits to the most advantaged, contrary to the design of the CCB. Parental leave is also policy-incoherent, creating a policy gap between access to leave and access to childcare, considering the limited availability and the higher expense of infant childcare. It is also incoherent with the aims of other child policies and services, considering the potential returns for child material security, nutrition, development, health and protection. Increasing the coverage and adequacy of parental leave is a fundamental child policy advancement that would help protect children from poverty, with a wide range of positive impacts on child well-being. Parental leave is associated with a greater likelihood of breastfeeding, child vaccination and brain development; less domestic violence and maternal depression; and lower rates of infant mortality and child obesity.

The 2023 federal budget pledged to increase access to additional parental leave time for adopted children, commensurate with 15 weeks of maternity leave for other children, which advances equity. But if parental leave were reimagined as an inclusive, child-centred social protection and care policy, offering a minimum of six months of adequately paid leave for all infants, it would be a key plank in an 'Infant Income Guarantee'. In coordination with the CCB, it would help protect every child from poverty in the most expensive and developmentally critical period of life.



Cash-Plus Programs That Work: Healthy School Food

An adequate and inclusive child income transfer is a key policy to protect children from poverty and can provide the basis for a cost-effective and rapid cushion for shocks such as pandemics and financial crises. There is an important distinction between platform social protection, which is designed to guarantee income security and mitigate chronic poverty, and specific cash-plus and in-kind social protection measures. Child-focused income benefits are the linchpin around which complementary cash-plus initiatives should be built. Cash-plus interventions for primary health care and nutrition can be more effective than cash transfers alone. Some other types of cash-plus initiatives do not have evidence of having the intended impact. More research is needed on when

and how cash-plus may be more effective than cash alone.

For instance, a distinct child dental benefit can soften the often-unplanned financial shock of dental fees. After Canada introduced the first stage of a child dental benefit in 2021, the strong take-up – by more than 300,000 children under 12 in the first months of the benefit – suggests high need. The design of a permanent dental benefit will matter to ensure actual access to different types of dental care and it should have the advantages that the CCB provides (e.g., timely payment, streamlined administration, equity and flexibility).

Nutritional cash-plus policies include food vouchers and feeding programs. School food programs are the most common form of in-kind child benefits, provided in 131 of 157 countries for which data is available (World Bank, 2015). Canada is the only G7 country and one of the only OECD countries without a national approach to a school food program. In 2019, 33.2 per cent of children reported feeling hungry when arriving at school every day or almost every day, above the OECD average of 27.4 per cent (OECD, 2023). Depending on their age, up to two in three students in Canada go to school without breakfast, and only one in five can access a school meal program.

Global evidence demonstrates the cost-effectiveness and improved policy coherence of school food programs, which are an important social protection policy that supports a range of positive child outcomes (World Food Programme, 2020).

In addition to improving the physical and mental health of children, well-designed programs improve readiness to learn at school and social relationships. Universality is important to ensure equitable and dignified access, as targeting is likely to create stigma that acts as a barrier to access; it is administratively challenging; and it will not effectively meet the needs of all children. For instance, one in four children with parents having a high level of education (a marker of higher income) reported often feeling hungry when arriving at school (OECD, 2023). Supporting the development of Indigenous-led school food programs would also advance Indigenous food systems and sovereignty (CCPA, 2023). At a time when food prices are rising for both families and for school food programs, it is timely to increase provincial and territorial support and to activate the December 16, 2021, federal commitment “to develop a National School Food Policy and work towards a national school nutritious meal program.”



Public Budgets to Fulfil the Promise to Children

Article 4 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child requires that States “shall undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognized in the Convention. With regard to economic, social and cultural rights, States parties shall undertake such measures to the maximum extent of their



“No state can tell whether it is fulfilling children’s economic, social and cultural rights ‘to the maximum extent of available resources,’ as it is required to do under article 4, unless it can identify the proportion of national and other budgets allocated to the social sector and, within that, to children, both directly and indirectly.”

– General Comment Number 5 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on General measures of implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (2003)

available resources and, where needed, within the framework of international cooperation.”

In ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child, governments accept a responsibility to give children the ‘first call’ on public resources. Yet UNICEF research across low- to high-income countries finds that underinvestment in children is a slow-burning, universal crisis. Public resources to meet children’s needs and rights are too little and, contrary to the best evidence, are invested too late in childhood. Budgets are also typically unbalanced, with inadequate social protection compared to investments in other sectors, which perpetuates inequities across education, health and other aspects of children’s lives.

All of the countries in Report Card 18 are party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Each has the obligation to make children their public investment priority and to invest in children to the maximum extent of their available resources. How do we know if they do? Even in

countries like Canada that have world-class fiscal management practices, the visibility of children in public budgets is typically obscure to all but the most ardent economists and auditors. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has consistently noted the lack of quality information concerning spending on children. In 2022, it asked Canada to clearly track allocations to children as a basis for determining the adequacy of the budget and to understand whether Canada is fulfilling its obligations to children (United Nations, 2022). Federal budgets in Canada have begun to identify which allocations are intended to benefit different groups of people according to gender, income, age and other equity dimensions in the Statement and Impacts Report on Gender, Diversity and Quality of Life. But the ‘youth’ age cohort is too broad to distinguish children’s specific rights and needs. UNICEF’s Public Finance for Children Toolkit provides guidance for Child Public Expenditure Management (C-PEM), which would assist Canada in implementing its obligations.



UN Committee on the Rights of the Child: 2022 Recommendation to Canada (United Nations, 2022)

10. The Committee welcomes the introduction of gender budgeting at the federal level. Recalling its general comment No. 19 (2016) on public budgeting for the realization of children's rights and taking note of target 16.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Conduct a comprehensive assessment of the budget needs of children and allocate adequate budgetary resources, in accordance with article 4 of the Convention, for the implementation of children's rights;

(b) Utilize a child-rights approach in the elaboration of the State budget, by implementing a tracking

system for the allocation and the use of resources for children throughout the budget. The State party should also use this tracking system for impact assessments on how investments in any sector may serve the best interests of the child;

(c) Define budgetary lines for all children, with special attention to those in disadvantaged or vulnerable situations that may require affirmative social measures such as children of Indigenous, African-Canadian, or other minorities and children with disabilities, and make sure that those budgetary lines are protected even in situations of economic crisis, natural disasters or other emergencies.



Fiscal Space for Children? Canada Has It

Making Canadians happier, healthier, wealthier and more resilient for generations to come means investing in children today. Canada has the fiscal space to fairly share its national wealth and provide a wealth of opportunity for every child in Canada. Each of Canada's fundamental social protection policies for children – child income benefits, parental leave and childcare – should be adequately funded for greater inclusion. Doing so would be an affordable final step in the progress Canada has been making in child social protection, rather than a giant leap in spending.

Canada has one of the largest economies in the world, but it ranked 21st in child poverty in 2021. Across rich countries, child poverty rates have little to do with levels or changes in national wealth or income. National incomes have risen everywhere (see figure 16), but child poverty has also risen in close to one third of these countries over the past decade.⁵

A country's level of expenditure on child benefits also has little relationship to its fiscal balance. More than half of high-income countries (with available data) dedicated more of their resources to children's social protection in 2019 than they did in 2010 (see figure 17), though not all did so in line with an increase in their fiscal space. Canada is one of a handful of countries that raised its child benefit expenditure as its fiscal balance increased, a pattern that might be expected. The increase in child benefit expenditure has been particularly high in Germany, Japan, Poland, Korea and Canada. Spending per child on social protection increased by 45 per cent in Canada, from 5.9 per cent of GDP per capita in 2010 to 8.6 per cent in 2019. However, Canada still ranked 25th among 38 rich countries for expenditure per capita on children and families in 2019 (see figure 18). In high-income countries, both social protection and resulting rates of child poverty are more a matter of political will than of budgetary resources. But as a country with one of the greatest increases in fiscal balance over the past decade, Canada can aim higher than a middle ranking in child poverty.

⁵ Canada's GNI per capita (in constant 2015 USD) has risen over the past decade: 42,650.43 in 2012, 44,838.89 in 2019 and 45,578.53 in 2021. Source: World Bank.

Canada's GDP growth has outpaced that of other G7 countries since the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. At the close of 2022, real GDP was 2.7 per cent above pre-pandemic levels, and the OECD predicts continuing GDP growth of 1.4 per cent for 2023 and 2024 (OECD Economic Outlook, June 2023). Historic childhood disadvantage is costing European OECD countries the equivalent of 3.4 per cent of GDP every year through weaker health, reduced employment and lower earnings, but the costs are lower in countries with stronger child social protection (e.g., 1.4 per cent of GDP in Finland) (Clarke et al., 2022).

The OECD concluded that Canada's projected economic growth alone will not close the gaps in living standards compared to better-performing economies, and it noted that building a more resilient and inclusive economy requires strengthening social protection policy. In fact, improving social protection was the first of five structural reform priorities OECD recommended for Canada. The OECD recognized that it is "vital to continue targeted support to vulnerable households, favouring use of income support. ...[A] permanent change to income support may be required to make social safety nets more reliable and effective for the longer term." The OECD also recommended that Canada increase access to quality, affordable childcare and expand take-up of parental leave, including increasing payment rates.

Yet the right of 'first call for children' is not evident in Canada's 2023 federal budget. Canada plans to invest \$69 billion in Old Age Security in 2022/23, rising to \$96.6 billion in 2027/28 – a substantial increase in fiscal space of 40 per cent. This compares to an increase of 20 per cent for the CCB, from \$24.9 billion in 2022/23 to \$30.1 billion in 2027/28. Managing the federal debt will increase in cost by \$62 billion over the next five years – far greater than the entire increase planned for the Canada Child Benefit, childcare and Employment Insurance (including parental leave pay) combined.

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives calculated that a non-taxable Canada Child Benefit Supplement (an additional \$8,500 per year to families with an earned income of less than \$19,000) would cost approximately \$5.9 billion in 2024-2025. Furthermore, it estimates that the cost of including the children who are currently excluded from the CCB due to their parents' immigration status (24,000 children in 2017) would be about \$160 million a year, well under 1 per cent of the total CCB budget.

At a pledged cost of \$200 million a year, a federal contribution to achieve a universal school food program in Canada would pale compared to the 2023 grocery rebate price tag of \$2.5 billion and would be aimed at the population most vulnerable to food insecurity and rising food prices. The Coalition for Healthy School Food has estimated that for \$5.4 billion annually, all levels of government can provide every school child access to healthy food every school day (Coalition for Healthy School Food, 2023).

Societies get a return on their social protection investments because households generally multiply the value of social transfers through increased spending and other engagement in economic activities. For instance, sufficient income can be a stabilizing factor for working parents, helping them pay for childcare and continue their work attachment. Child-sensitive social protection provides the highest yielding investment in a nation's long-term human capital stock. Nobel Laureate James Heckman demonstrated that rates of return on investments made during the prenatal and early childhood years average between 7 and 10 per cent more than investments made at older ages. A cost-benefit analysis of a U.S. child allowance found that a \$1,000 increase in family income in one year for a single-parent family with one child generated social benefits five times greater than the initial investment, for example through reduced health care costs, crime and child protection services (Garfinkel et al., 2022).

Policymakers today face vital choices for the future of societal well-being and prosperity in their nations. The most successful countries in the coming years will recognize now that the future of inclusive societies with equitable economic growth depends more than ever on their investments in ‘family-friendly’ policies. No country can build prosperity-producing human capital if it leaves a vast proportion of its children disadvantaged during their developmental years. Parliament’s 1989 all-party resolution to end child poverty remains a relevant but as-yet unrealized commitment to the children of Canada. Now is the time to round the last curve in the journey to end child poverty: Enshrine this goal in refreshing the federal Poverty Reduction Strategy and commit the resources necessary to achieve it.

Figure 16: Changes in national income and child poverty

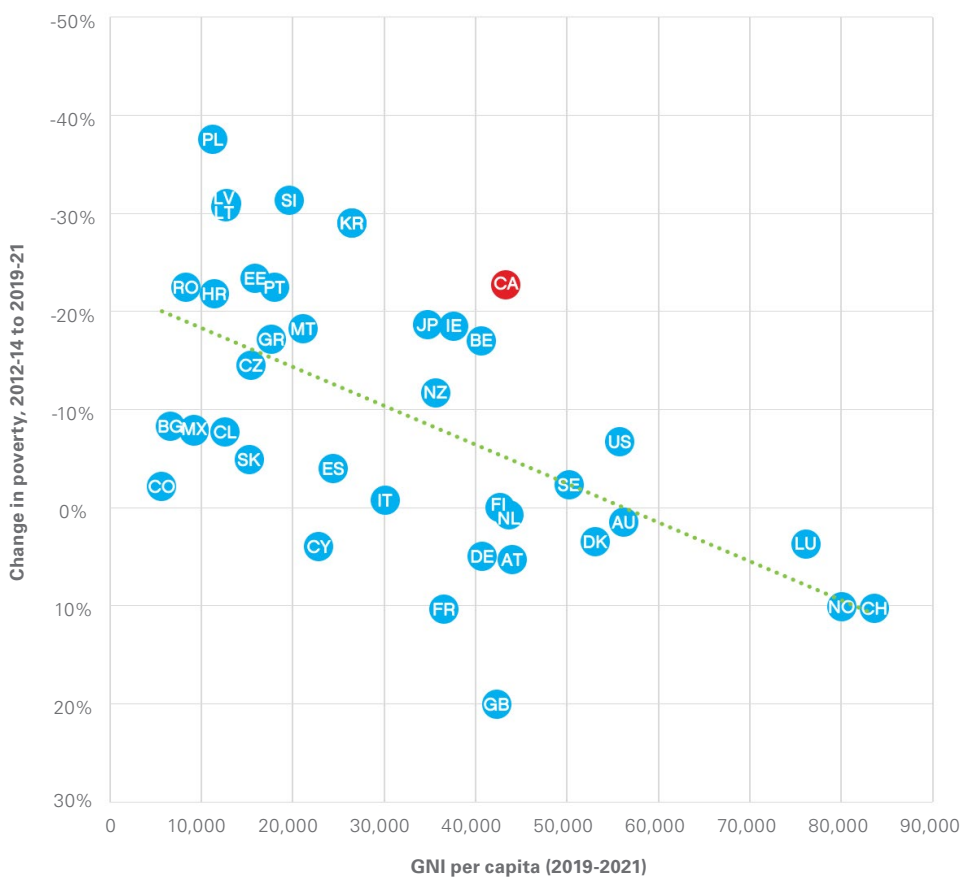


Figure 17: Changes in fiscal balance and social protection expenditure per child, 2012/13 to 2018/19

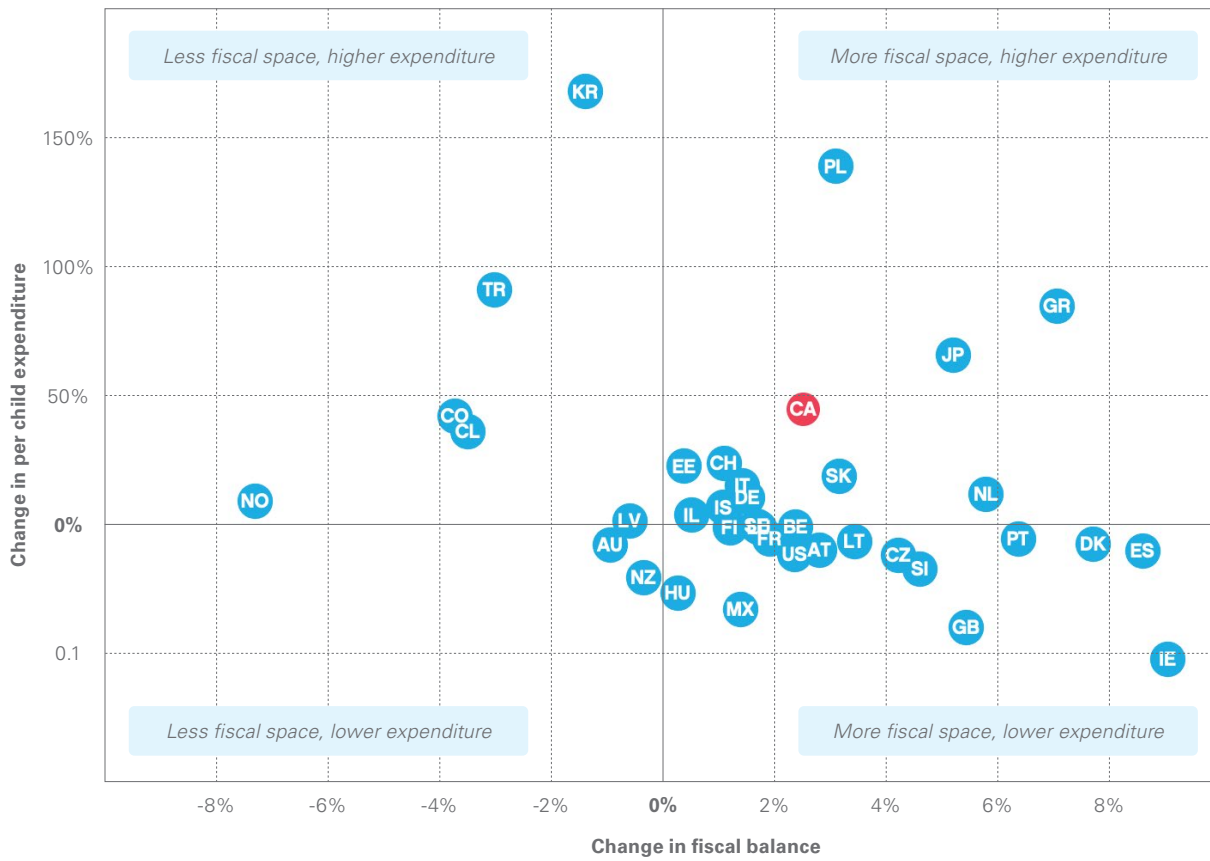
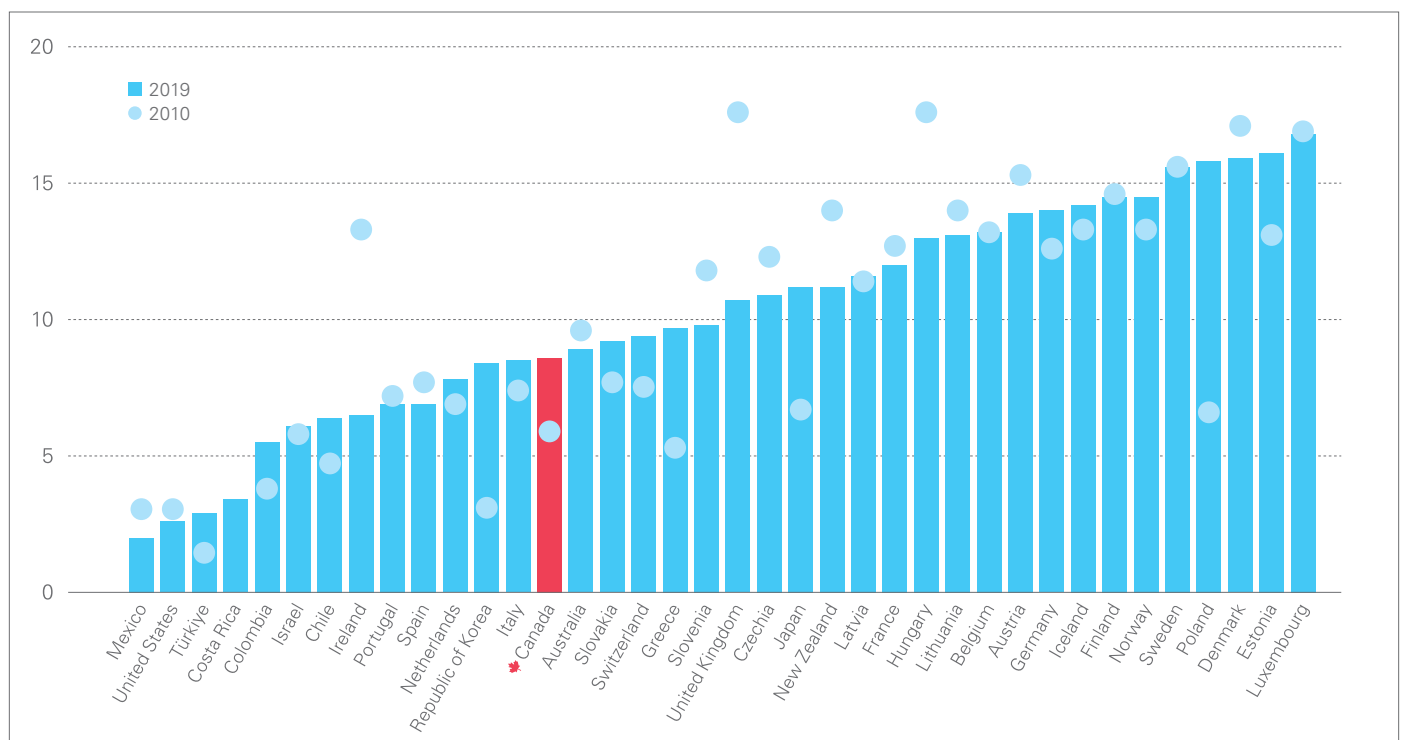


Figure 18: Expenditure on child benefits per child as a percentage of GDP per capita





What Should Canada Do?

Our Next Steps


What Should Canada Do?

- 1** Eliminate child poverty with a low-income supplement to the Canada Child Benefit and access for administratively excluded children.
- 2** 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.
- 3** 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).
- 4** Provide every school child with healthy food at school, every school day.
- 5** Assure every child access to quality, affordable childcare.
- 6** 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.
- 7** 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.

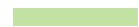

Appendices & References

Appendix A: Canadian Indicators in UNICEF Report Card 18

CANADA RANKING

	Top Third
	Middle Third
	Bottom Third

CANADA COMPARISON

	Better than Average or Median
	Worse than Average or Median

Indicator	Canada Rank	Canada Value	Top Value	Average Value	Median Value
CHILD INCOME POVERTY					
Child monetary poverty (2012-2014)	22	22.2%	9.6% (Denmark)	20.9%	20.5%
Child monetary poverty (2019-2021)	19	17.2%	9.9% (Denmark)	19%	18%
Child monetary poverty (2021)	21	17.8%	9.1% (Finland)	17.6%	17.6%
Change in child monetary poverty (2012/14-2019/21)	7	-23%	-38% (Poland)	-9%	-8%
CHILD SOCIAL PROTECTION					
Expenditure on family benefits per child	25	8.6% GDP per capita	16.8% GDP per capita (Luxembourg)	10.2%	10.25%
Change in social protection expenditure per child (2010-2019)	6	45%	167% (Republic of Korea)	14.7%	0.17%
Adequacy of social transfers for out-of-work couple/two children	29	37.4% of average wage	89% of average wage (Denmark)	46.8% of average wage	50% of average wage
Change in adequacy of social transfers for out-of-work couple/two children	18	-1.2% of average wage	30.1% of average wage (Italy)	-0.5% of average wage	-1.9% of average wage
CONTEXT					
Gross National Income (GNI) per capita (2019-2021) in constant 2015 USD	13	\$44,083	\$81,200 (Switzerland)	\$34,937	\$31,622

NOTES

- » Refer to UNICEF Report Card 18 for data reference years and sources
- » Differences between countries may not be statistically significant

Appendix B:

An Overview of Selected Income Support Programs Benefiting Children in Canada

Canada's foundational child-focused income benefit program is the federal Canada Child Benefit. In addition, federal cash-plus income benefits and many broader population income-related initiatives that benefit some children are available. Provinces and territories also provide such programs, with different levels of investment and different beneficiaries, which creates inequities in children's access to sufficient income. Universal benefits are paid to all families with children, while a targeted or means-tested child benefit provides support only to children in families who are considered poor based on their incomes (and/or assets). Affluence-tested child benefits are similar to means-tested programs, but their income threshold is set higher to exclude the richest households. The tables below describe the main income programs for children through social insurance, social assistance and tax credits as of April 2023. Most of these programs provide support to children through their family (i.e., parent[s] or guardian[s]).

Social insurance programs, or contributory social protection programs, are those for which eligibility is determined based on employment history and social security contributions. Any program that requires the beneficiary to have worked a certain amount of time in the past belongs to this category.

Social assistance programs, or non-contributory social protection programs, provide regular (monthly, quarterly, bi-annual or annual) transfers to households that meet the eligibility criteria. The table below includes child-focused social assistance programs provided to families with children, rather than broad programs that may take the presence of children into account when determining transfer amounts.

Name of Program	Description	Benefit Amount	Duration
Maternity benefits under the Employment Insurance (EI) program (all of Canada excluding Quebec)	Maternity benefits are only available to the person who is away from work because they are pregnant or have recently given birth. They cannot be shared between parents. The person receiving maternity benefits may also be entitled to parental benefits.	55% of previous income up to a weekly maximum of \$650	Up to 15 weeks
Parental benefits under the Employment Insurance (EI) program (all of Canada excluding Quebec)	<p>Parental benefits are available to the parents of a newborn or newly adopted child.</p> <p>The recipient must choose between two options: standard or extended parental benefits.</p> <p>This choice determines the number of weeks and the weekly amount received.</p> <p>Parents can receive their weeks of benefits at the same time or one after another.</p>	<p>Standard option: 55% of previous weekly income up to a maximum of \$650 (in 2023)</p> <p>Extended option: 33% of previous weekly income up to a maximum of \$390 (in 2023)</p>	<p>Standard option: Up to 40 weeks can be shared between parents, but one parent cannot receive more than 35 weeks of standard benefits</p> <p>Extended option: Up to 69 weeks can be shared between parents, but one parent cannot receive more than 61 weeks of extended benefits</p>

Name of Program	Description	Benefit Amount	Duration
<p>Maternity benefits under the Quebec Parental Insurance Plan (QPIP)*</p> <p><i>*In Quebec, the Ministère du Travail, de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale administers maternity, parental and adoption benefits for residents of Quebec under the Quebec Parental Insurance Plan (QPIP).</i></p>	<p>The right to the widest possible protection and assistance to the family, particularly for the care of dependent children.</p> <p>The right to the special protection of mothers before and after childbirth; adequate pay or social security for working mothers during this period.</p>	<p>Basic Plan: 70% of average weekly earnings</p> <p>Special Plan: 75% of average weekly earnings</p>	<p>Basic Plan: 18 weeks</p> <p>Special Plan: 15 weeks</p>
<p>Paternity benefits under the Quebec Parental Insurance Plan (QPIP)</p>		<p>Basic Plan: 70% of average weekly earnings</p> <p>Special Plan: 75% of average weekly earnings</p>	<p>Basic Plan: 5 weeks</p> <p>Special Plan: 3 weeks</p>
<p>Parental benefits under the Quebec Parental Insurance Plan (QPIP)</p>		<p>Basic Plan: 70% of average weekly earnings for first 7 weeks; 55% of average weekly earnings for subsequent 25 weeks; 4 additional benefit weeks at 55% of earnings once 8 shareable adoption benefit weeks have been paid to each parent</p> <p>Special Plan: 75% of average weekly earnings; 3 additional benefit weeks at 75% of earnings once 6 shareable adoption benefit weeks have been paid to each parent</p>	<p>Basic Plan: 32+4 weeks</p> <p>Special Plan: 25+3 weeks</p>
<p>Non-shareable adoption benefits under the Quebec Parental Insurance Plan (QPIP)</p>		<p>Basic Plan: 70% of average weekly earnings</p> <p>Special Plan: 75% of average weekly earnings</p>	<p>Basic Plan: 5 weeks to each parent</p> <p>Special Plan: 3 weeks to each parent</p>
<p>Shareable adoption benefits under the Quebec Parental Insurance Plan (QPIP)</p>		<p>Basic Plan: 70% of average weekly earnings for first 7 weeks; 55% of average weekly earnings for subsequent 25 weeks; 4 additional benefit weeks at 55% of earnings once 8 shareable adoption benefit weeks have been paid to each parent</p> <p>Special Plan: 75% of average weekly earnings; 3 additional benefit weeks at 75% of earnings once 6 shareable adoption benefit weeks have been paid to each parent</p>	<p>Basic Plan: 32+4 weeks</p> <p>Special Plan: 25+3 weeks</p>

Name of Program	Description	Benefit Amount	Duration
Adoption-related welcome and support benefits under the Quebec Parental Insurance Plan (QPIP)		Basic Plan: 70% of average weekly earnings Special Plan: 75% of average weekly earnings	Basic Plan: 13 weeks Special Plan: 12 weeks
Multiple adoption benefits under the Quebec Parental Insurance Plan (QPIP)		Basic Plan: 70% of average weekly earnings Special Plan: 75% of average weekly earnings	Basic Plan: 5 weeks to each parent Special Plan: 3 weeks to each parent
Single-parent adoption benefits under the Quebec Parental Insurance Plan (QPIP)	Child must have arrived in the care of the parent on or after January 1	Basic Plan: 70% of average weekly earnings Special Plan: 75% of average weekly earnings	Basic Plan: 5 weeks to each parent Special Plan: 3 weeks to each parent
Canada Pension Plan (CCP) children's benefits	There are two types of CPP children's benefits: 1) A disabled contributor's child's benefit – a monthly payment for a child of the person receiving a CPP disability benefit 2) A surviving child's benefit – a monthly payment for a child of the deceased contributor. For the benefit to be paid, the deceased contributor must have made sufficient contributions to the CPP	Annually adjusted flat rate monthly payment of \$281.72 (2023)	Continuous until: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » the month after the child turns 18 or, if over 18, is no longer in full-time attendance at a school or university » the month after the child turns 25 » the month after the parent or guardian's disability benefit stops » the month after a child is no longer in the custody and control of the parent or guardian receiving a disability benefit » the month after the child dies

Appendix C:

Glossary

Children living in poverty are deprived of nutrition, water and sanitation facilities, access to basic health care services, shelter, education, participation and protection. While a severe lack of goods and services hurts every human being, it is most threatening and harmful to children, leaving them unable to enjoy their rights, to reach their full potential and to participate as full members of society (United Nations General Assembly, The Rights of the Child [Resolution A/RES/61/146, 23 January 2007], para. 46).

'Family-friendly' policies provide time, resources and services in the critical childhood years and include income benefits, childcare and parental leave. This package of evidence-based policies reduces child poverty and supports child development, protection and improvements in health and education outcomes. These policies support a good start for every child and lay the foundation for children's success in school, the attainment of lifelong health, and the ability of children and families to exit poverty. They benefit not only children but every member of a family. They are core public policies because they bring high returns for well-being, gender equality, sustainable growth, productivity and economic advancement. 'Family-friendly' policies have features of both care policies and social protection policies. According to the ILO, care policies refer, in part, to "public policies that allocate resources in the form of money, services or time to caregivers or people who need care" and social protection policies include "policies that facilitate parents' involvement in both direct care and paid employment, such as paid maternity, paternity and parental leaves". Social protection policies give all children a fair chance in life and reduce the lifelong consequences of poverty and exclusion.

Food insecurity, as this problem is measured and monitored in Canada, refers to inadequate or insecure access to food due to financial constraints. The experience of food insecurity can include concerns about running out of food before there is money to buy more, the inability to afford a balanced diet, going hungry, missing meals, and in extreme cases, not eating for whole days because of a lack of food and money for food.

A social protection system includes policies and programs aimed at preventing, reducing and eliminating economic and social vulnerabilities to poverty and deprivation and their lifelong consequences. Cash transfers (also called income or social transfers or benefits), social insurance, parental leave, childcare and other social care services help families overcome poverty and vulnerability and access health care, nutritious food and quality education. They also optimize child health and development in the most critical years of life. UNICEF works to build integrated, high-quality, equitable social protection systems.

Appendix D:

International Abbreviations (ISO)

Country name	2-letter ISO code	3-letter ISO code
Australia	AU	AUS
Austria	AT	AUT
Belgium	BE	BEL
Bulgaria	BG	BGR
Canada	CA	CAN
Chile	CL	CHL
Colombia	CO	COL
Costa Rica	CR	CRI
Croatia	HR	HRV
Cyprus	CY	CYP
Czech Republic	CZ	CZE
Denmark	DK	DNK
Estonia	EE	EST
Finland	FI	FIN
France	FR	FRA
Germany	DE	DEU
Greece	GR	GRC
Hungary	HU	HUN
Iceland	IS	ISL
Ireland	IE	IRL
Israel	IL	ISR
Italy	IT	ITA

Country name	2-letter ISO code	3-letter ISO code
Japan	JP	JPN
Latvia	LV	LVA
Lithuania	LT	LTU
Luxembourg	LU	LUX
Malta	MT	MLT
Mexico	MX	MEX
Netherlands	NL	NLD
New Zealand	NZ	NZL
Norway	NO	NOR
Poland	PL	POL
Portugal	PT	PRT
Republic of Korea	KR	KOR
Romania	RO	ROU
Slovakia	SK	SVK
Slovenia	SI	SVN
Spain	ES	ESP
Sweden	SE	SWE
Switzerland	CH	CHE
Turkey	TR	TUR
United Kingdom	GB	GBR
United States	US	USA

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