

# Divided city: Life in Canada's child poverty capital <sup>[1]</sup>

2016 Toronto Child and Family Poverty Report Card

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**Format:** Report

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## AVAILABILITY

Full report PDF <sup>[2]</sup>

## Executive summary

### Purpose of report:

- This report draws from new data to update the 2014 report, *The Hidden Epidemic: A Report on Child and Family Poverty in Toronto*.

It is the result of a collaboration between CAS of Toronto, Family Service Toronto, Social Planning Toronto, and Colour of Poverty – Colour of Change.

- It describes the level – and unequal distribution – of poverty and deprivation among children and families in Toronto, and explores how living in poverty affects access to housing, food, recreation, education and transit.

- By monitoring and reporting on poverty in Toronto, we hope this report will encourage the government of Toronto, with support from provincial and federal governments, to renew and fulfil its commitment to reduce and eliminate child and family poverty in our city.

### Key findings:

- Toronto continues to be the child poverty capital of Canada: it has the highest rate of low-income children among large urban centres (26.8%).
- There were 10,000 fewer Toronto children living in low-income families in 2014 compared to 2013; however, 133,000 children continue to live in poverty.
- Toronto is a deeply divided city in terms of the living conditions and life opportunities for children and youth.
- Families with members who are racialized, newcomers, or living with disabilities, or families led by a single parent, are much more likely to be living on low incomes compared with all other families.
- Recreation and early learning participation levels of Toronto children are highly dependent on family income: half of children in families with annual incomes under \$30,000 do not regularly participate in out-of-school arts or sports programs (in contrast, only 7% of children in families with incomes over \$100,000 don't participate in these programs).
- Children in families with incomes in the lowest quintile are almost twice as likely as children in families with the highest quintile of incomes (17% vs 9%) to have two or more vulnerabilities related to physical development (such as fine and gross motor skills, energy levels, independence and daily living skills) when entering Kindergarten.
- Children in schools with families in the top quartile of incomes are 1.5 to 2 times more likely to meet or exceed Grade 3 provincial standards for reading, writing and math (compared to children in schools in the lowest-income quartile).
- One-third of families with children under age 18 in Toronto are living in unaffordable housing, and 27% of families with children age 12 or under are living in housing that is unaffordable, overcrowded, or in poor state of repair.
- There has been a 48% increase in food bank use in Toronto's inner suburbs since 2008, and children across Toronto appear to be at increased risk of going hungry.
- Toronto transit users pay the highest proportion of local transit costs of any Canadian city, lack income-based fare reductions, and – especially in ethnoracially diverse suburban neighbourhoods – lack equitable access to service.

### Key recommendations:

- City Council should honour its commitment to reduce and eliminate poverty and deprivation in Toronto. It should adhere to the work plan of its poverty reduction strategy, ensure that the strategy is shaped by people with experience of poverty, and put in place clear short- and longer-term progress targets for ensuring fair and equitable access to adequate incomes, housing, transit, child care, food and other

supports.

- To reduce child and family poverty, it is imperative that the City address its ongoing fiscal shortfall, which puts city services and programs at ongoing risk of cut-backs and prevents adequate investment to improve access to services. To achieve this, the City must approve and implement a financial plan that includes fair and adequate revenue generation (taxation) and sustainable spending that is focused on improving the lives of children, adults and families most in need.

**Region:** Ontario <sup>[3]</sup>

**Tags:** child poverty <sup>[4]</sup>

inequality <sup>[5]</sup>

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