

# Sask. Child poverty rates still among highest in Canada: report <sup>[1]</sup>

The province's child poverty rates have consistently measured higher than other provinces

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**Source:** CBC News

**Format:** Article

**Publication Date:** 21 Nov 2018

## AVAILABILITY

Access online <sup>[2]</sup>

## EXCERPTS

Saskatchewan's child poverty rates are higher than almost all other provinces, according to a report on the issue.

The provincial rate of child poverty is about 26.7 per cent, it says in the Saskatchewan Report on Child and Family Poverty that is based on 2016 data. The national rate was reported at 19.6 per cent. Only Manitoba and Nunavut had worse numbers.

The report says inequality has grown in Saskatchewan.

"Again, Saskatchewan has the dubious distinction of being the bottom of the pack. We have the highest domestic violence rate of all the provinces, the highest sexual assault rate of all the provinces," said Hillary Aitken, who is the senior director of housing with YWCA Regina.

Aitken said she continues to see the same vulnerable people fall through the cracks and a lack of empathy for those doing the falling.

"People are getting further removed from this problem and like to think of it as something that somebody else should respond to," Aitken said.

"We're seeing in both of those programs the need for services increased steadily. Not only are we serving more women, but we're turning away more women," she said.

She said staff have to turn people away every day.

Aitken said these shelters are for extreme situations and don't account for the people struggling day-to-day to make ends meet.

The YWCA also has homes for children involved in the welfare system. Aitken said the majority are apprehended and put in the system because of issues stemming from poverty.

She said children are often apprehended because moms have to make tough choices to survive. For example, they may not be able to miss work to take a child to a doctor's appointment.

She also said poverty is "disproportionately impacting Indigenous kids in Saskatchewan."

There is a downstream effect of poverty, she said, noting impoverished children can later become tied up in the justice or health systems if there is not early intervention.

Aitken wants to see action.

"The report talks about a missed opportunity to turn things around — that investing in kids and family poverty is actually a good thing to do for our province — and it hasn't been done for many years."

### **Minister says poverty 'is a concern'**

Minister of Social Services Paul Merriman said "poverty in the province of Saskatchewan doesn't lie at the provincial government's feet. This is a community issue."

Merriam said provincial data showed overall poverty rates dropped from 10.7 per cent in 2015 to 9.2 per cent in 2016.

Merriam said the province will look to add more resources in identified "hot spots" such as Saskatoon, North Battleford and Prince Albert.

"We have some initiatives in place but it's going to take time. We can't fix this problem within a couple of years because it took us years to get here."

### **Author says stats unsurprising**

"Unfortunately, this is not surprising," said Miguel Sanchez, an associate professor in sociology at the University of Regina who co-authored Saskatchewan's report.

He said the subjects of the report are children, "who through no fault of their own have to experience the effects of poverty."

Sanchez said that when Saskatchewan experienced its resource boom, there was an "overwhelming message that economic growth will solve poverty."

He said the numbers indicate economic growth isn't the solution to Saskatchewan's child poverty problem.

Sanchez wants people to consider economic redistribution and government transfers as a solution.

The numbers show child poverty numbers would be much higher had it not been for government assistance, he said.

### **Related link:**

2018 Provincial reports and supporting material on child and family poverty: Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Saskatchewan, [3]

**Region:** Saskatchewan [4]

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Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/18/11/sask-child-poverty-rates-still-among-highest-canada-report>

### **Links**

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