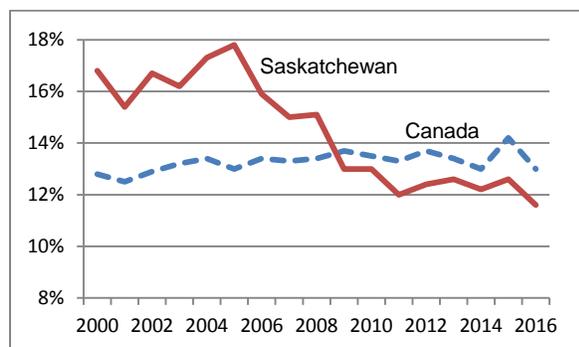


Poverty in Saskatchewan – 2016

Poverty continues in Saskatchewan. In 2016, 125,000 of the 1.1 million people who lived in Saskatchewan were poor. While provincial poverty rates have declined since 2000, the income of many children, adults, and seniors in the province is not enough to feed, clothe, and house them in an acceptable manner.

This report summarizes Saskatchewan poverty trends and patterns from 2000 to 2016, using the Low Income Measure After Tax level (LIM) – see last page for an explanation of the LIM.

Figure 1. Poverty rates, Canada and Saskatchewan, 2000-2016



Poverty rates in Saskatchewan were at the 16 to 18 per cent level in the early 2000s, declined to 12 per cent in 2011, and remained at approximately this level through 2016. Over these years, poverty rates for Canada changed little, with ups and downs around 13 per cent.

Saskatchewan's economic expansion through 2014 helped those with low incomes. In the early 2000s, Saskatchewan's poverty rate was well above that for Canada, and then fell below the Canadian rate in 2009. There have been ups and downs since, with the province's poverty rate paralleling changes in the slightly higher rate for Canada.

Who are the poor?

Poverty is not uniformly spread across the population but is concentrated among specific groups. The poverty rate for 2016 was 11.6%, meaning that 125,000 Saskatchewan residents lived in households that could not afford life's necessities. Table 1 illustrates how poverty differs depending on circumstances.

Table 1. Persons in poor households and poverty gap, Saskatchewan, 2016

Characteristic	Persons in poverty		
	# in '000s	Rate (%)	% Gap
Children under age 18	31	13.0	27.8
In couple families	18	9.5	23.4
In female lone-parent families	11	53.3	34.4
Persons aged 18-64	69	10.2	33.9
In families	42	7.6	29.3
Not in families	27	22.0	41.2
Seniors aged 65 plus	25	15.7	12.1
Males – all ages	58	10.6	30.7
Females – all ages	67	12.7	25.7
Total – all ages	125	11.6	28.0

In 2016, 31,000 children in Saskatchewan lived in poor households. The child poverty rate for children in female lone-parent families was especially high, with over one in two poor. For those living in couple families, whether children or adults, the poverty rate of 7 to 9 per cent was below the provincial average. More than one in five single adults aged 18-64 were poor (22 per cent). Almost 16 per cent of seniors had poverty level incomes. And females were more likely to experience poverty than were males.

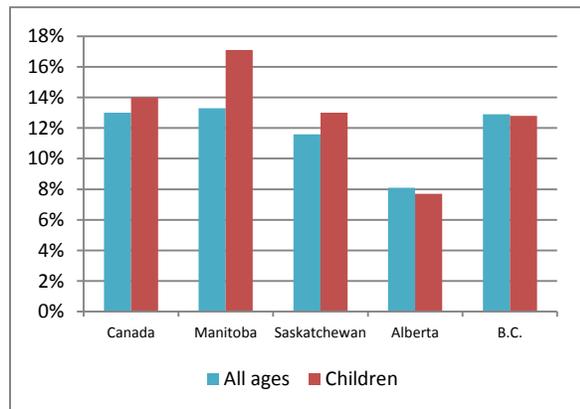
Poverty gap. The poverty gap in the right column of Table 1 shows the average percentage that incomes for persons in poverty fell below the LIM level. For example, the overall poverty gap of 28 per cent in 2016 means that the income of Saskatchewan persons in poverty averaged 28 per cent below the LIM level.

For those living in families, the poverty gap was about ten percentage points lower than for those not living in families. Many persons aged 18-64 and not in families were in severe poverty, with a poverty gap of over 40 per cent.

The poverty gap for seniors is the least among the groups shown in Table 1. For the 16 per cent of seniors in poverty, incomes are low but close to the LIM level, averaging 12 per cent below it.

Poverty in Western Canada. Saskatchewan poverty rates in 2016 were lower than in Manitoba and Canada but higher than in Alberta; the Saskatchewan child poverty rate was also greater than that for British Columbia.

Figure 2. All ages and child poverty rates, Canada and western provinces, 2016



Indigenous persons. Of the 60,000 persons with First Nations identity and living off-reserve in Saskatchewan, 40 per cent were in poor households. For the 57,000 in the province with Métis identity, 18 per cent reported being in poverty. This contrasts with a poverty rate of 11 per cent for persons who reported a non-Aboriginal identity. These figures do not include data for the 50,000 plus First Nations persons living on reserves – Statistics Canada did not measure their poverty rate.

Immigrants. Of the 64,000 immigrants who arrived before 2011, the poverty rate was 11 per cent, less than the non-immigrant rate of 12 per cent. Immigration to the province increased dramatically since 2006. For the 48,000 immigrants arriving between 2011 and 2016, the poverty rate was 21 per cent. In 2016 there were 12,200 non-permanent residents in the province, with a poverty rate was 28 per cent.

Disabled persons. Saskatchewan poverty levels or rates for those with a disability do not appear available. In 2016, the Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability (SAID) had 17,177 recipients. Statistics Canada estimates that 23 per cent of Canadians aged 25-64 with a disability had low income in 2014. It also reports that 117,000 persons aged 15 and over in

Saskatchewan had a disability in 2012. Together these imply that there are approximately 20,000 poor persons with a disability in the province.

Poverty by region of Saskatchewan, 2015.

Poverty is distributed unevenly across the province – in inner city neighbourhoods, in the north, in small towns, and in rural areas. While 13 per cent of all persons in Saskatchewan were in poverty in 2015, in the northern federal electoral district of Desnethé-Missinippi-Churchill River 22 per cent were poor. This contrasts with an 8 per cent poverty rate in Regina-Lewvan, the provincial district that had the least poverty. In Meadow Lake, North Battleford, and Prince Albert the poverty rate was 19 to 20 per cent, as opposed to 12 per cent in Regina.

Conclusion. The economic expansion that Saskatchewan experienced through 2014 raised incomes in the province. From 2000 to 2004, median after-tax income in Saskatchewan was 10 per cent below that for Canada; over the five years from 2012 to 2016 it was 7 per cent above that for Canada. The expansion was sufficiently broad based that over the same period the province’s poverty rate fell by 4 percentage points and the child poverty rate by 6 percentage points. While median income in 2016 was no greater than in 2013, Saskatchewan incomes remained above those for Canada over this period. The current economic slowdown in the province, with increased unemployment, may lead to higher poverty rates in coming years.

Social programs have helped reduce the poverty rate. In 2016, part of the decline in the child poverty rate can be attributed to improved child benefits, with the Canada Child Benefit coming into effect in July 2016. The Canada Pension Plan and a basic income in the form of Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income Supplement have helped reduce the poverty rate and the poverty gap for seniors. These programs show that poverty can be reduced.

At the same time, to have 125,000 poor in a rich province is unacceptable. Improved social assistance benefits, universal child care, a Living Wage and a basic income for all, along with a commitment to adequate housing could ensure that no household lives in poverty.

Measuring poverty. Poverty in this report refers to persons who live in households with incomes less than Statistics Canada's Low Income Measure, After Tax (LIM or LIM-AT). Statistics Canada terms this a measure of low income, rather than a poverty level. However, the LIM is used internationally to indicate populations in poverty.

The level of the LIM is one-half of median after-tax household income, adjusted for household size. It does not differ by province or region of Canada. For a family of four persons the LIM level was \$45,314 in 2016 – in this report a family of four with an income below this is considered to be in poverty. For a single person living alone the LIM level was \$22,657 in 2016. To contrast these poverty levels with households having greater income, consider that the 2016 Regina Living Wage income for a family of four was \$61,770. And the median income for Saskatchewan families in 2016 was \$82,400. The LIM is well below each of these.

Data sources. Provincial and Canada data in this report were obtained from Statistics Canada, CANSIM series 206-0011, 206-0041, and 206-0042. These data, released earlier this month, come from the Canadian Income Survey, 2016. Data for Indigenous persons and immigrants come from the 2016 Census of Population for Canada and refer to 2015 household income.

For the disabled, data come from the following:

Statistics Canada. 2015. *A profile of persons with disabilities among Canadians aged 15 years or older, 2012*. Catalogue 89-654-X.

Canada Social Report: Social Assistance Summaries, Saskatchewan 2016.

Statistics Canada. 2017. *Low income among persons with a disability in Canada*. Catalogue 75-006-X.

The Living Wage for 2016 is available from <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/2016-living-wage-regina-and-weyburn>

Report reference

Paul Gingrich. 2018. *Poverty in Saskatchewan – 2016*. uregina.ca/~gingrich/skpoverty2016.pdf

Send me an email paul.gingrich@uregina.ca if you have any questions or require further details and I will attempt to respond.

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