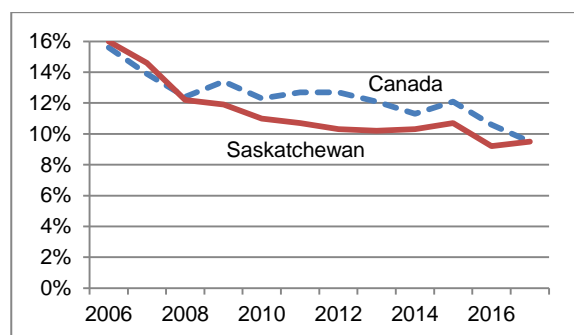


Poverty in Saskatchewan – 2017

Poverty increases. 103,000 of the 1.1 million people living in Saskatchewan in 2017 were poor. Following a continued decline in poverty from 2006 to 2016, in 2017 the number of poor in the province increased by 5,000 persons. Most of this increase was among adults, with no change in the number of poor children.

This report summarizes Saskatchewan poverty trends and patterns from 2006 to 2017 using the Official Poverty Line (OPL - see last page).

Figure 1. Poverty rates, Official Poverty Line, Canada and Saskatchewan, 2006-2017



In the early to mid-2000s, 15 per cent or more of the Saskatchewan population was in poverty. Saskatchewan's economic expansion from 2000 to 2014 raised incomes for low and middle income individuals and families; in 2008 the province's poverty rate fell below that for Canada. But over the last five years, provincial incomes have stagnated or fallen – especially for those at the lower end of the income distribution. In 2017, the poverty rate for the province rose to equal that across Canada.

Who are the poor? Poverty is concentrated among specific groups. Table 1 illustrates how poverty differs depending on circumstances.

The provincial poverty rate for 2017 was 9.5 per cent of the population, meaning that 103,000 Saskatchewan residents could not afford life's necessities. This rate does not include estimates for First Nations persons living on reserves, where Statistics Canada did not measure poverty levels. Since average incomes are low on reserves, including these First Nations would boost the province's reported poverty rate.

Table 1. Persons in poor households and poverty gap, Saskatchewan, 2017

Characteristic	Persons in poverty		
	# in '000s	Rate (%)	% gap
Children under age 18	25	10.3	28
In couple families	13	6.6	34
In female lone-parent families	9	39.5	21
Persons aged 18-64	74	10.8	40
In families	35	6.2	36
Not in families	39	31.2	44
Seniors aged 65 plus	5	3.0	36
Males – all ages	53	9.6	39
Females – all ages	50	9.4	35
Total – all ages	103	9.5	37

In 2017, 25,000 children in Saskatchewan lived in poor households. At 40 per cent, the poverty rate for children in female lone-parent families was especially high. For children or adults living in couple families, the poverty rate of approximately 6 per cent was below the provincial average; the poverty rate for those not living in families was much greater. Only 3 per cent of seniors had poverty level incomes. Male and female poverty rates differed little.

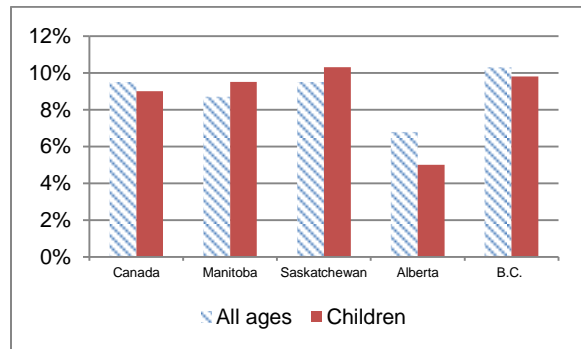
Poverty gap. The right column of Table 1 with the % gap is the average percentage that incomes of persons in poverty fell below the Official Poverty Line. The 2017 Saskatchewan poverty gap of 37 per cent means that the average income of persons in poverty was 37 per cent below the OPL.

The 39,000 poor adults aged 18 to 64 not living in families averaged \$10,500 in disposable income in 2016 – \$8,200 less than the poverty line of \$18,700 for this group. This meant a huge poverty gap of 44 per cent. Three-quarters of these were single and never married, 70 per cent were age 25 or more, and almost one-half were employed full-time or part-time for much of the year.

Poverty among seniors is low but, for the 3 per cent of poor seniors, with a gap of 36%, many have incomes well below the poverty line.

Poverty in Western Canada. The 2017 poverty rate for Saskatchewan rose and is now above that for Manitoba and Alberta. The child poverty rate declined in 2017 but was above that for Canada and all western provinces.

Figure 2. All ages and child poverty rates, Canada and western provinces, 2017



Recent data from the 2016 Census of Canada give poverty rates for indigenous, immigrant, and visible minority persons for the year 2015 (see last page).

Indigenous persons. For the 175,000 who identified themselves as Aboriginal persons in the 2016 Census, the poverty rate was 36 per cent – as opposed to a 9 per cent rate for non-Aboriginal persons. Among the 115,000 First Nations persons, the poverty rate was 46 per cent. And for the 60,000 persons of Métis or other Aboriginal identity, the poverty rate was 17 per cent. While 16 per cent of the province's population reported being Aboriginal persons, they accounted for 43 per cent of the poor.

Immigrant persons. In 2016, there were 112,000 Saskatchewan persons who were immigrants to Canada. For the 32,000 who arrived before 2001, and for the 33,000 arriving from 2001 to 2010, poverty rates differed little from that of the non-immigrant population. International immigration to the province increased regularly since 2006 and, among the 48,000 who arrived between 2011 and 2016, the poverty rate was 19 per cent. In addition, there were 12,000 non-permanent residents – their poverty rate was 44 per cent. These rates contrast with a poverty rate of 8 per cent for the non-indigenous, non-immigrant population.

Visible minority persons. In 2016, 116,000 persons in the province identified themselves as belonging to a visible minority; 18 per cent were poor. For the 61,000 South Asian, Chinese, or Black persons, the poverty rate was 22 per cent. In contrast, the rate for the 32,000 persons of Filipino origin was 7 per cent, below the 8 per cent poverty rate for those who were neither indigenous nor visible minority. For the visible minority population of 23,000 not in the above groups, the poverty rate was 28 per cent.

Persons with a disability. Of the population aged 15 or over in the province in 2017, there were 196,000 persons with a disability. At least 18,172 of these were poor since they received support from the Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability (SAID). Across Canada, among those aged 25-64, 14 per cent with a mild disability were poor, while 28 per cent with more severe disabilities were poor. Poverty among seniors with disabilities was lower.

Conclusion. Economic expansion raised provincial incomes. By 2014, the Saskatchewan median income was 11 per cent above that for Canada. Since 2014, incomes in the province have stagnated or fallen. By 2017, the Saskatchewan median income was only 3 per cent above the Canadian level. And after a decline in the province's poverty rate from 16 per cent in 2006 to 9.2 per cent in 2016, the poverty rate rose to 9.5 per cent in 2017.

Social programs can lower poverty rates. The Canada Pension Plan and a basic income in the form of Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income Supplement have helped to reduce poverty among seniors. Across Canada, improved child benefits have led to a decline in child poverty rates; the Canada Child Benefit came into effect in July 2016. These programs show that poverty can be reduced.

It is unacceptable to have more than 100,000 poor persons in a rich province like Saskatchewan. Improved social assistance benefits, universal child care, adequate housing, a Living Wage for all, and a universal basic income could ensure that no child or adult lives in poverty.

Measuring poverty. In August 2018 the federal government established an Official Poverty Line (OPL) for Canada. The Line is the Market Basket Measure – 2008 base (MBM), an income level below which a household does not have enough money to buy a specific basket of goods and services that allows it to meet its basic needs and achieve a modest standard of living in its community. For 2017, a household with two children and two adults with a disposable income below the following was in poverty.

Saskatchewan, rural	\$37,211
Saskatchewan, under 30,000	\$38,306
Saskatchewan, 30,000-90,000	\$35,738
Saskatoon	\$37,957
Regina	\$37,851

The Official Poverty Line adjusts for households of different size and composition. For persons living alone, the Line is one-half of the above – across the province the average was \$18,706. The measure of income is disposable income, that is, after-tax income minus non-discretionary expenses such as public and private insurance expenses, child care costs, and some medical and housing expenses.

Note that estimates of poverty using the OPL differ from those in poverty reports that use other measures of low income.

Data sources. Data for provinces and Canada in this report come from Statistics Canada, Tables 11-10-0135-01 and 11-10-0066-01. These data, released in February 2019, come from the Canadian Income Survey, 2017 (CIS). Data for adults not living in families are from the CIS Public Use Microdata File, 2016. The CIS does not provide estimates of poverty for those living on reserves.

Some data on immigrants and visible minorities come from Saskatchewan Bureau of Statistics. 2017. *Saskatchewan Immigration and Ethnocultural Diversity: 2016 Census of Canada*. <http://publications.gov.sk.ca/documents/15/104389-2016%20Census%20Ethnic%20Origins.pdf>.

For more information about the OPL, see Chapter 9 of <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/poverty-reduction/reports/strategy.html>

For persons with a disability, data come from Statistics Canada Table 13-10-0374-01 and:

Stuart Morris et al. 2018. *A demographic, employment and income profile of Canadians with disabilities aged 15 years and over, 2017*. Canadian Survey on Disability, Statistics Canada, 89-654-X2018002. pp. 19-21.

Maytree. 2018. *Social Assistance Combined Summaries, Canada 2017*. pp. 64-71. <https://maytree.com/welfare-in-canada/>

Data from the 2016 Census of Canada

In February, 2019 Statistics Canada released a Public Use Microdata File that provides detailed information from the 2016 Census of Canada. Data about poverty among indigenous, immigrant, and visible minority persons are not available for 2017 and, in this report, come from this file. These Census data refer to incomes in 2015 and poverty levels refer to the OPL. Classifications in the Census are as follows:

Indigenous persons: The 2016 Census asked “Is this person an Aboriginal person, that is, First Nations (North American Indian,), Métis or Inuk (Inuit)?”

Non-permanent residents include those with work or study permits, temporary foreign workers, and refugee claimants.

Visible minority status includes those who identified themselves as South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Arab, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean, or Japanese.

Thanks to Dana Folkersen, Joanne Havelock, and David Rosenbluth for comments on an earlier draft.

Reference to this report

Paul Gingrich. 2019. *Poverty in Saskatchewan – 2017*. uregina.ca/~gingrich/skp2017.pdf

Send me an email at paul.gingrich@uregina.ca if you have any questions and I will attempt to respond. Reports about earlier years are available at uregina.ca/~gingrich.

Last edited April 23, 2018.