



THE FEDERATION
of COMMUNITY SOCIAL SERVICES of BC

Altogether better.

Life in BC Snapshot: 2017

Poverty and inequality

Things aren't getting better for the people of BC

Two years ago, The Federation of Community Social Services of BC scoured the news, research, and literature to take a snapshot of what life in BC was like. We wanted to understand how good things were for the people of our province. We also wanted to investigate important aspects of day-to-day life that get overlooked by a government focused on economic prosperity.

Things didn't look that great. And two years later, they are no better. We have updated these snapshots to prove that point and to help you talk about the state of our province and the things that need to change in order for the people of British Columbia to actually prosper and thrive.

News headlines about poverty and inequality in BC

- ⇒ BC jobs plan not enough to address high poverty rate - *Times Colonist*, 1/12/2017 (1)
- ⇒ Places large and small seek BC poverty-reduction plan - *Times Colonist*, 9/29/2016 (2)
- ⇒ Rate of child poverty in B.C. 'scandalous' advocate says - *CBC News*, 11/16/2016
- ⇒ Northern BC families have highest levels of food insecurity - *Dawson Creek Mirror*, 9/1/2016
- ⇒ Rising food bank use leads to call for BC poverty reduction strategy - *CBC News*, 11/16/2016
- ⇒ Shut down of Victoria homeless camp puts spotlight on poverty - *CBC News*, 8/7/2016
- ⇒ Half a million people going hungry in BC, report says - *Vancouver Sun*, 9/1/2016
- ⇒ Working poverty in Metro Vancouver a widespread issue - *CBC News*, 6/29/2016

Case study: Dan learns not all jobs are created equal

“ Dan lives in Dawson Creek with his elderly mother. He has his high school diploma and a university degree, but is stuck struggling to make ends meet. Dan keeps hearing about how low BC's unemployment rate is, but his two part-time minimum wage jobs barely allow him to scrape by. His mother's pension covers most of their rent but they have no benefits and must share one vehicle. Last month, Dan had to take a third contract job doing woodwork on the weekends just to be able to pay for their higher-than-average BC Hydro bill. It seems crazy to Dan that he is working 50 hours a week and still forced to live like this.

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Regional districts in British Columbia have child poverty rates higher than 20%.⁶

16%

More than 16% of households in northern BC struggle to put food on the table.⁵



1/13

There is only one province in Canada without a Poverty Reduction Plan: BC.³

Why these issues matter

Contrary to popular belief, the majority of children living in poverty have parents in paid work.⁶ Most poor people in BC have jobs. Unfortunately, much of BC's recent job creation has focused on temporary, low-wage, and/or precarious work. That means those already in poverty have no way out. Low unemployment isn't worth bragging about when workers still struggle to put food on the table. It's time for real, substantial efforts to help the people of BC get out of poverty. It's time for things to get better.

100,000

In March 2016, over 100,000 people in BC used food banks; almost 1/3 of them were children.³

Raising awareness about these issues

- BC's child poverty rate is higher than the Canadian average (18.5%) and represents 163,260 kids, more than the entire population of Abbotsford.⁶
- Despite being one of the wealthiest provinces in the country, 13.2% of the population (595,000 British Columbians) live in poverty.³
- BC is the most unequal of all provinces. The average income of the top 10% of families was 13 times the income of the bottom 10%.⁶



Talking points about poverty and inequality in BC

*"This poverty is eating into the middle class. Full-time working people are not able to make ends meet."*²
- Valerie Warmington,
Nelson councillor

*"Half of those living below the poverty line are either the working poor or children of the working poor."*¹
- Seth Klein, CCPA

*"Poverty is correlated with a wide variety of negative physical, emotional, and social outcomes in children and youth."*⁷
- Office of the BC Provincial Health Officer

60%

Nearly 60% of food banks in BC reported an increase in use in 2015, an increase higher than the national average.⁴

About The Federation

The **Federation of Community Social Services of BC** is a social justice umbrella organization. We work tirelessly to improve the social conditions in BC on behalf of our members: community social service organizations across the province. We believe that:

- ⇒ Healthy, happy, and supported communities make good economic sense.
- ⇒ For your family to succeed, all families must succeed.
- ⇒ Job creation alone is not the solution to our province's social problems.

Learn more at www.fcssbc.ca or email us at info@fcssbc.ca

\$8 billion

The annual province-wide cost of poverty according to the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition.²

ADDITIONAL SOURCES:

(3) *BC has no poverty reduction plan*. BC Poverty Reduction Coalition. bcpovertyreduction.ca/learn-more

(4) *Hunger Count 2015*. Food Banks Canada. www.foodbanksbc.com, 2015.

(5) *Priority health equity indicators for British Columbia: Household food insecurity indicator report*. PHSA. Aug 2016.

(6) *2016 Child Poverty Report Card Summary*. First Call BC. still1in5.ca/report-card-summary Nov 2016.

(7) *Is "Good" Good Enough? Provincial Health Officer's Annual Report*. Office of the Provincial Health Officer. Nov 2016.