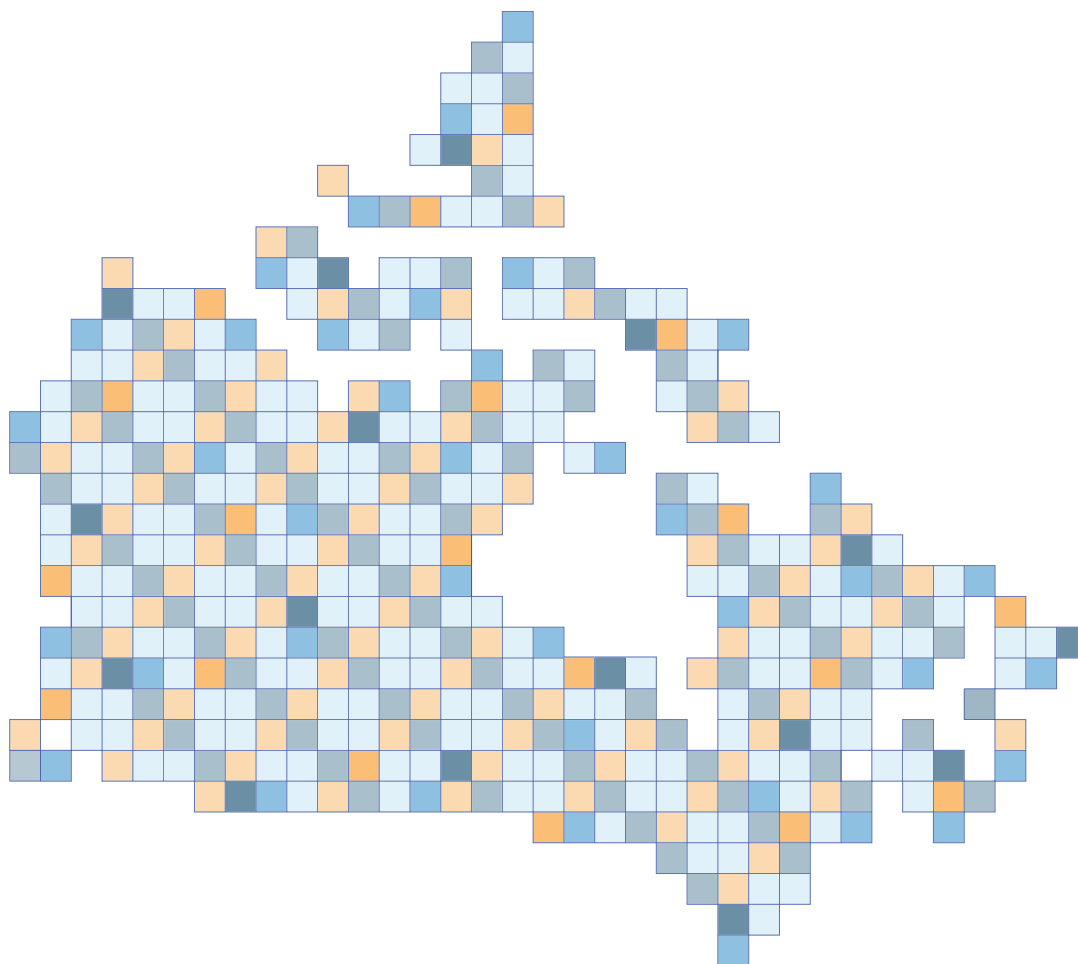


# Manitoba Poverty Progress Profile



**2016**



CANADA WITHOUT POVERTY  
CANADA SANS PAUVRETÉ

*Poverty is a violation of human rights.*

## OVERVIEW

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Poverty rates in Manitoba remain some of the worst in the country. In 2014, 232,480 economic families in the province were living in poverty. The depth of poverty in Manitoba hovers around 25-35% below the poverty line.<sup>1</sup> Children in Manitoba experience particularly high poverty rates; for example, in 2014, 1 in 3.5 children (or 85,110 children) were living in poverty in the province.<sup>2</sup>

Manitoba is also host to the highest rate of Indigenous children living in poverty in the country. A recent report from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives found that the poverty rate for Indigenous children is as high as 76% on reserve and 39% off reserve.<sup>3</sup>

Following the implementation of the *Poverty Reduction Strategy Act*<sup>4</sup> in June 2011, the Government of Manitoba introduced a four year poverty strategy entitled *All Aboard: Manitoba's Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion Strategy (All Aboard Strategy)* in May 2012. To complement the *All Aboard Strategy*, the government has released additional action plans for targeted areas related to poverty. These actions plans include topics such as: housing, early childhood development, opportunities for youth, food security, targeted supports for people in need, and sustainable employment. An action plan specifically for Indigenous people in Manitoba is yet to be published, although Indigenous people are included in the action plans.

### Plan Components and Highlights

The *All Aboard Strategy* notes an overall vision of “a future where people are socially included, connected to their communities, participating in the economy and contributing to our province”.<sup>5</sup> The strategy identifies the following seven priority areas:

**Building blocks for employment;  
Targeting supports for those in need;  
Food security;  
Housing;  
Closing the gap for Indigenous Manitobans;  
Creating opportunities for youth; and  
Early childhood development.**<sup>6</sup>

*Manitoba's Poverty Reduction Strategy Act* entrenches the *All Aboard Strategy* in legislation. The Act also establishes the Ministerial-level *All Aboard Committee* community representation. The Committee's responsibilities include reviewing and providing advice on the content of the poverty reduction and social inclusion strategy, monitoring strategy implementation, and facilitating community involvement in the development and implementation of the strategy. The legislation also requires the government to summarize budget measures that are intended to implement the strategy in each fiscal year.

## Community Engagement in Plan Development and Implementation

In 2013, roughly 500 Manitobans were invited to participate in an *All Aboard* public survey and over 140 participated in the consultation process in person.<sup>9</sup> The consultations included 10 public meetings in six regions, an online or print survey, and a request for written submissions, with the aim of learning what works well, what needs improvement, and what initiatives are recommended.<sup>10</sup> The consultations included people living in poverty (14% of respondents) and people who had experienced poverty at some point in their lives (45% of respondents).<sup>11</sup>

In August 2013, Manitoba released the results of the consultations in *All Aboard: What We Heard*.<sup>12</sup> The report summarizes key findings that emerged from the process, which prioritized housing and food security, as well as training and employment opportunities.<sup>13</sup> The consultations also explored the stigmatization of poverty and the psychological and spiritual effects of experiencing poverty, leading the government to take an inclusive approach to poverty reduction.<sup>14</sup>

## MEASURING PROGRESS AND SUCCESS

### Statistical Indicators of Poverty (unofficial measurement tools)<sup>†</sup>

	<b>LICO</b> Low-Income Cut-off After-tax <sup>15</sup> ***	<b>LIM</b> Low-Income Measure After Tax <sup>16</sup>	<b>MBM</b> Market Basket Measure <sup>17</sup>	<b>Food Bank Usage<sup>18</sup></b>	<b>Social Assistance** Recipients<sup>19</sup></b>	<b>Minimum Wage<sup>20</sup></b>
<b>2005</b>	139,000, <b>12.7%</b>	213,520	127,000, <b>11.6%</b>	46,161, <b>3.9%</b>	60,866	\$7.25
<b>2006</b>	124,000, <b>11.2%</b>	214,180	123,000, <b>11.1%</b>	*	60,035	\$7.60
<b>2007</b>	114,000, <b>10.2%</b>	213,170	107,000, <b>9.6%</b>	*	58,278	\$8.00
<b>2008</b>	96,000, <b>8.5%</b>	214,870	104,000, <b>9.2%</b>	40,463, <b>3.3%</b>	56,769	\$8.50
<b>2009</b>	101,000, <b>8.8%</b>	217,130	132,000, <b>11.5%</b>	47,925, <b>3.9%</b>	56,282	\$8.75/ \$9.00
<b>2010</b>	107,000, <b>9.2%</b>	221,210	124,000, <b>10.7%</b>	57,966, <b>4.7%</b>	58,874	\$9.50
<b>2011</b>	105,000, <b>8.9%</b>	223,910	134,000, <b>11.5%</b>	55,575, <b>4.5%</b>	60,754	\$10.00
<b>2012</b> ****	*	225,020	*	63,482, <b>5.1%</b>	62,332	\$10.25
<b>2013</b>	*	228,420	*	60,229, <b>4.7%</b>	62,028	\$10.45
<b>2013</b>	*	232,480	*	61,691, <b>4.9%</b>	61,919	\$10.70
<b>2015</b>	*	*	*	65,791, <b>5.0%</b>	63,078	\$11.00
<b>2016</b>	*	*	*	61,914, <b>4.7%</b>	*	\$11.00

† The LICO, LIM and MBM rates in this chart should be compared vertically to understand trends in poverty from year-to-year. As there is no official low-income threshold, and data is calculated differently based on a variety of factors, these rates are not comparable horizontally.

\* Data not available.

\*\* "Social Assistance" refers to the total number of people assisted by all Social Assistance programs in the province.

\*\*\* The *All Aboard Strategy* does not refer to a specific statistical indicator of poverty in the province. However, the 2016/16 annual report references all three measurements: LICO, LIM and MBM.

\*\*\*\* The *All Aboard Strategy* was introduced in 2012.

## The Manitoba Government's Success Indicators

According to *The All Aboard Strategy*, an annual report measures the strategy's progress using 21 indicators to measure performance in key areas. The latest report is for the 2014-2015 year. It outlines progress using specific indicators and documents goals accomplished throughout the year. These indicators include:

- Total Units of Social and Affordable Housing Supported by the Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation
- New Households Served through the Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation's Programs and Services
- Households in Core Housing Need
- Sense of Community Belonging
- High School Graduation Rates
- Participation in Adult Learning Programs
- Employment Rates
- Average Weekly Earnings
- Minimum Wage Rates
- Low-Income Rates
- Income Inequality
- Post-Secondary Education Participation
- Early Development Instrument Scores
- Availability of Licensed Childcare
- Number of Children in Care
- Teen Birth Rates
- Potential Years of Life Lost by Income Quintile
- Prevalence of Chronic Diseases by Income Quintile
- Average Number of People Receiving Co-ordinated Home Care Services
- Continuity of Physician Care
- Number of People Using Access Centres<sup>21</sup>

## Notes on Critical Thematic Areas

**Human Rights:** Manitoba's poverty reduction strategies do not use a human rights approach or explicitly encourage the implementation of human rights. However, the strategy is embedded in legislation, ensuring that Manitoba remains accountable to its communities by implementing programs, measuring success, and transparency through annual reports.

**Income and Employment Support:** In 2015, *Employment and Income Assistance (EIA)* and *Rent Assist* programs were implemented in Manitoba. Notably, Manitoba is unique in providing both benefits to families. Single parents may be eligible if household basic needs and shelter costs are higher than total financial resources. For example, single parents with two children may receive between \$1,069 - \$1,120 per month in provincial tax-free income; single people with disabilities and without children may receive \$871 per month.<sup>22</sup>

Manitoba's unemployment rate is 6.4% as of November 2016 — a rate lower than the national average of 7%.<sup>23</sup> Minimum wage in the province is set at \$11 per hour.

This rate is far below a living wage, calculated at \$14.07 per hour in Winnipeg, \$13.46 per hour in Thompson, and \$13.41 per hour in Brandon.<sup>24</sup> Approximately 55% of workers over the age of 20, or 38,600 of Manitobans, work for minimum wage.<sup>25</sup>

**Housing:** According to the 2014/15 *All Aboard Annual Report*, the Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation supported 31,681 social and affordable housing units and 4,368 special purpose and personal care beds.<sup>26</sup> Core housing need, measured by affordability, suitability, and adequacy, is lower in Manitoba than the rest of the country by 2.2% as of 2011 and has been decreasing overall since 1991.<sup>27</sup> Adequate housing is linked to better health and decreased crime; currently, about 10% of Manitobans experience inadequate housing.<sup>28</sup>

In 2015, the government launched *Rent Assist*, a new rental benefit available to social assistance recipients and other low-income private renters.<sup>29</sup> *Rent Assist* replaced the *Employment and Income Assistance (EIA)* shelter allowance and *RentAid* programs, providing “an integrated benefit program available to all household categories, based on income and rent paid”.<sup>30</sup>

**Education:** Manitoba has increased school funding by 2.55% and total education related expenditures by \$99 million.<sup>31</sup> In 2014/15, 18.8% of 18 to 34 year olds attended a public post-secondary institution in Manitoba.<sup>32</sup> Manitoba has also committed more than \$4 million annually since 2012 to the *Bright Futures Fund*, which allows schools to work with community organizations to increase access to post-secondary education for disadvantaged, under-represented, and low-income students.<sup>33</sup>

In 2014, the high school graduation rate — a success indicator reported in the 2014/15 *All Aboard Annual Report* — rose to 87.0% from the previous year’s rate of 85.3%.<sup>34</sup>

**Early Childhood Education and Care:** In 2015, Manitoba launched *Starting Early Starting Strong: Manitoba’s Five-Year Plan for Early Childhood Development*, focusing on promoting strong, healthy, and nurturing families.<sup>35</sup> The government planned on investing \$25 million for 20 new or expanded early learning and childcare centers and 5,000 more childcare spaces.<sup>36</sup>

Since 1999, funding for childcare in Manitoba has tripled to \$162.9 million and the government recently announced a plan to make childcare universally accessible.<sup>37</sup> The plan includes the creation of 12,000 more childcare spaces while increasing wages in the childcare sector and eliminating the daily fee for the most vulnerable families.<sup>38</sup> However, childcare was not highlighted under the new government’s 2016 budget.

According to the latest statistics, 3.6% of Manitoba children are in the care of Child and Family Services and 87% of children in care are Indigenous.<sup>39</sup> In 2013, 9,940 children were taken into care, 8,633 of these children were Indigenous.<sup>40</sup> The number of children in the child welfare system has risen by 29% in the last decade.<sup>41</sup>

**Healthcare:** As noted in the *All Aboard Action Plan: Targeted Supports for Those Most in Need* persons with low-incomes are more likely to be treated for mental health concerns.<sup>42</sup> Mental health is a prevailing issue in Manitoba. In fact, between 2004 and 2009, 24% of people living in Manitoba accessed mental health services, including treatment for depression, anxiety, addiction, personality disorders, and schizophrenia.<sup>43</sup> In the 2016 budget, health expenditures experienced a 4.0% increase from the previous year, translating to \$247 million.<sup>44</sup> The budget did not specify the amount of this funding that would be allocated for mental health programs.

**Food Security:** According to Food Banks Canada, 61,914 people accessed food banks in Manitoba in March 2016 and 42.9% of food bank users were children.<sup>45</sup> The *All Aboard Action Plan: Food Security* promises funding for community based food programs, school nourishment programs, targeted programs for pregnant women and infants, and collaboration among all levels of government and community organizations.<sup>46</sup>

The Community Food Centre reaches roughly 500 people per week with cooking classes, meal programs, and community gardens among other food security services in Winnipeg.<sup>47</sup> In 2014, the Bloodvein First Nations got year-round access to fresh foods with the completion of the Bloodvein River Bridge. There is continual support to remote Manitoba communities to gain better access to healthy foods through the development of a retail food subsidy to offset the costs of healthy foods in 10 of Manitoba's most remote communities, including several First Nations communities.<sup>48</sup> In 2015, an increase of \$200,000 in funding for school nutrition programs delivered by the Child Nutrition Council of Manitoba allowed for greater support for in-school and after-school healthy food programs for children who need it most.<sup>49</sup>

## Views From Outside the Manitoba Government

After being dubbed "where Canada's racism problem is at its worst" by a January 2015 *Macleans* article, Winnipeg has attracted attention with its renewed leadership in Indigenous and non-Indigenous reconciliation.<sup>50</sup> However, much more meaningful public engagement remains to be done on this issue. While Indigenous people in Manitoba still score very low in poverty indicators, communities are pursuing grassroots efforts to break barriers and to learn about Indigenous history and culture.

In September 2015, grassroots leaders held a Local Racial Inclusion Summit in Winnipeg where diverse community members came together to talk about the effects and causes of racism in the city and to learn from one another.<sup>51</sup> The Our Summit Winnipeg meeting was organized as an alternative to Mayor Brian Bowman's One Winnipeg Summit. It was led by young Indigenous and non-Indigenous leadership. Red Rising Magazine and 13 Fires Winnipeg emerged out of these efforts and along with Aboriginal Youth Opportunities, young, mainly – but not exclusively – Indigenous people continue to lead from the grassroots.<sup>52</sup>

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives Manitoba office co-published *The View*

*from Here 2015: Manitobans Call for a Renewed Poverty Reduction Plan* with the Canadian Community Economic Development Network – Manitoba. This community-based poverty reduction plan was endorsed by over 100 organizations, educators, and labour groups. The *View from Here 2015* updated consultations with experts on the ground and people with lived experience. It uses a comprehensive approach and includes over 50 recommendations to reduce poverty in Manitoba. Make Poverty History Manitoba uses the *View from Here* as the basis for its efforts. The newly elected Manitoba government has stated it will create a new poverty reduction plan in Budget 2017 to replace *All Aboard*.

Campaign 2000: To End Child and Family Poverty in Canada has identified concerns about the number of children living in poverty, and Indigenous families who are disproportionately living in poverty because of the political control on their lives.<sup>53</sup> Additionally, in its recent 2016 Report Card, the group noted that while the new government has recognized that it is “really critical” that a poverty strategy be implemented with hard targets and timelines, this promise was yet to be realized in the November 2016 speech from the throne.<sup>54</sup>

## THE BOTTOM LINE

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Recent reports demonstrate the shockingly disproportionate experience of poverty for marginalized groups — particularly Indigenous children — within the province of Manitoba. In terms of poverty rates among provinces and territories, Manitoba is second only to Nunavut, which has the highest overall rates.<sup>55</sup> Although the government has taken positive steps by funding new initiatives and grassroots movements are engaging the public in discussion, much more work needs to be done. The Government of Manitoba must create and implement concrete targets and timelines for its poverty strategy before long term and systemic change can happen in the province.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION



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## ENDNOTES

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<sup>28</sup> Kirsten Bernas, "Fast Facts: Further poverty reduction efforts needed in Manitoba", *Policy Alternatives* (28 October 2014), online: <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/commentary/fast-facts-further-poverty-reduction-efforts-needed-manitoba>.

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